



Avesta Volume 4: Remorseless Paradise of the Fallen

## Interlude: ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ Divine Sword

1

- What does all of this mean?!

While the girl screams in frustration, I just quietly watch her. I fully understand her feelings, and such a reaction seems more than natural to me, but I cannot grieve or be angry with her. I have had to experience this many times, and, frankly, now it would be completely inappropriate. I have not experienced pure, strong emotions for a long time, as she does. All I have left is deep fatigue and detachment... I just have to sigh about my stupid, dreary fate and wonder about the next repetition of this farce.

- Something, obviously. This is how this world works.

- So... you knew that from the very beginning?

- Exactly. But what was the point of me talking about it? Would you listen to me?

I answer with some mockery, and the girl can only hesitate, mutter some rudeness and look at me frowningly. I can only envy such sincerity. However, I can't help but feel sorry for her. Surely, she would be much happier if she died and did not know anything. In a sense, her indignation is the emotion of a person deprived of his peace, and even if she understands that it is inappropriate to take out her anger on me, she can hardly do anything about it. Yes, after all, everything happens exactly the same as always.

- The previous Nadare reacted in a similar way. And from now on, you must become the new Nadara.

- Do not call me that!

Rising to her feet in a fit of emotion, she tries to scream her name.

- My name is ..., my name is ...

She is already whispering, as if trying to grab onto something, but she fails to finish the phrase, and understanding this reality distorts her face with a grimace of horror. Since I have seen this course of events many times already, I explain everything to her without any hesitation, just as I have done so far.

- This Word has a completely different weight. Whether you remember your real name or not, you are not able to pronounce it and thereby deny the current reality due to your status. The title of Nadare, like me, has existed since the creation of the universe.

Therefore, it cannot be resisted by the feelings or history of one individual. Whatever her personal will, being chosen as Nadare, she is doomed to live as Nadare. No, perhaps it would be more correct to say that it is precisely “people of this kind” who become Nadare. The girl continues to look at me with a gloomy look and sings through her teeth, as if squeezing out the words:

- I would never... accept such a world. I will destroy it all, without a trace.

- Please don't hold back on anything.

- You think I can't do it?!

- I don't say that. I just don't have high expectations.

I do not urge her on, but indifferently say everything as it is.

Well, how long can she keep her original intention?

From my own experience, I know that all previous Nadare behaved the same way at first. They were angry at the injustice of this world and raged, as if trying to take revenge on all things, but after seven or eight hundred years they lost their fuse. Because they understood that they were only a toy of some huge entity. They do not have the virtues to justify the unimaginable power that has suddenly fallen on them, but at the same time they are not so stupid as to remain ignorant of this discrepancy. - In fact, I believe that wise mediocrity is a mandatory quality for anyone who inherits the title of Nadare. You and I are opposites. Our positions are as different as black and white, but we both have the role of scales that embody the balance of this world. That's why I can't destroy Nadare's idea, and you can't destroy me. I guess you won't be satisfied with that, but if you want to change the current situation, you'll have to follow the rules.

- So... I need to throw you out with the Fractured World and start the game again?

- Yes, and someday there will be a hero who will come with me in his hands in order to strike you down. Isn't that something worthy of salvation?

After all, unlike me, you are allowed to relinquish your post. You don't have to endure this fruitless struggle forever. I feel sincere envy, sincere jealousy. Judging by the examples known to me, some two or three thousand years, and you will be able to say goodbye to all this.

But I will have to continue indefinitely after this. But I'm already unbearably disgusted by everything and everything.

Looks like I'm not the only one who's unhappy here. I don't even notice how Nadare's behavior has changed somewhat. Her black-and-white eyes still glow with rage, but now something else is mixed in them. Melancholy and joy, the idea of sympathy for a comrade in misfortune.

“Have you lived so long in the world that you have forgotten how to express your feelings? Looking at you, I am only once again convinced of how this world is full of mistakes.”

“I won't deny the last one. As I say, you and I ... “

“Enough to discuss duties. Say what you really think, Divine Sword.” Anger comes to the fore again, and Nadare's tone becomes even rougher. “I will not forgive this world. And you think exactly the same. So there must be something we can do. Especially if it is we who embody this sick destiny.”

“...”

“I won't ask you to work with me. But you, too, do something on your part. Until you accept this condition, I will not set in motion the Fractured World.”

“Do you want to lock me in the Singularity forever?”

“Exactly. Maybe this move will make a difference too.”

She throws an unexpected idea at me, which surprises me to say the least. I have never seen such a development. Nadare of the past said everything, but they were very active on the issue of resuming the game. As strong as their rebellious spirit was, in the end they remained slaves of the Avesta, not to mention the fact that they hardly wanted to endure my company forever. Quite quickly, they moved the matter from the dead point by the Fractured World and as a result disappeared without changing anything.

However, this Nadare tells me to become an accomplice in her rebellion. She does not even hide the fact that if I do not agree, then she is ready to continue this dialogue for at least an eternity.

What is happening? Is it different from what it was before? Or me?

Suddenly, in my inner reflections, the face of a boy pops up.

“Okay ... let it. To tell you the truth, I also have a few ideas.”

Therefore, when I whispered these words, they shocked me myself. However, the words follow one after another, without stopping. Moreover, I myself do not notice how they are getting hotter ...

“Just the other day, I left someone who could be a real savior to die, and in doing so, through my own stupidity, I missed an extremely rare opportunity. It can be said that you became Nadare partly through my fault.”

“Oh, so you are a big sinner with us?”

“Sin... Really, regrets gnaw at me. It was impossible to allow the miracle of that child to remain unfulfilled.”

I whisper it, as if carving in my being. Exactly, I have to pay for my mistake. Albeit late, but I understand that this is exactly my true desire. I sincerely want to embody a fragment of the prayer that he left behind.

“I don’t know what exactly I can do, and I can’t judge what result it will lead to. Perhaps it will be a real hell on earth, so creepy that no one will be able to even look at it.”

“Still, it’s much better than the current situation. Even if board a turn over, leaving only a deserted wasteland, victory is victory.”

“This world will be able to change ... No, the goal should be to set its death. This is what I will hope for.”

“I need an unprecedented hero who will reign as the hegemon of the new universe after destroying everything and everything. I believe that in order to save “everyone” who is mistaken in everything, it is necessary at least once to destroy them to the ground. Therefore, first I want to meet someone who deigns to break me as their symbol. I can't promise anything, but I'll do my best. Will that suit you, Nadare?”

“At the moment. It remains only to pray that our next meeting will not be the same as in the past.”

Nodding with a smirk too scary to be called snarky, she raises her hand over me.

“Needless to say, this is my first Fractured World. I have not yet mastered it to the same extent as my predecessor, and I am not responsible for where you are thrown.”

“I don't care. That's how it always goes.”

"Ha, you're still insufferable."

With a tired look, Nadare snorts and exercises the divine power that is contained in her name.

“Maybe at least this time you will try to expect some unusual development of events?”

On this we parted again. Even if it was a fleeting verbal promise, which you can't even call an oath, but the fact that everything didn't go “as usual” sunk into our souls, and we went our own ways.

To begin with, I was thrown into a completely unidentified part of space, after which I hovered aimlessly through its expanses for about a thousand years. It went the same way as before, and in this sense, it can be said that my expectations were not met. So, I had no reason to do something special, and I decided to start with a proven method.

As Nadare has the Fractured World, so I have my own power. Part of it is that I can see and hear every corner of the universe, thereby constantly staying up to date. If necessary, I could send the call myself but I decided to observe not at all because of a passive attitude.

Until now, I thought that I should behave like an instrument, and therefore did not think about myself, but this time I reasoned that I should see everything with my own eyes, and therefore remained silent. I didn't want to turn my back on the disaster caused by my misstep and focused on watching as punishment for my crime.

Having done this, I once again felt more acutely than ever how deplorable this universe is.

Everyone was killing each other. They did not feel any doubts, repeating the war, in which blood was washed away with blood. Good and evil. This struggle of two opposites took place everywhere, but there is no place for free will in it: a way of life driven into clear limits is utterly limited and awkward, and everyone is just wasting their lives on this ridiculous puppet show.

A man and a woman admire the sunset, hug each other, chop the child under their feet into small pieces, walk on his remains and say words of love.

In another corner of the universe, a flock of animals is watching a family working in the fields from the shadow of a forest thicket, licking their lips and impatiently waiting for the night to come.

On the battlefield, which has already become a chaotic brawl, two armies shake the air with screams of pain and rage, and a tree with a human face that has grown from the sea of their blood turns them all into mincemeat and absorbs them with its roots.

The knight who gives the order to defend the country is crushed by a fifteen-legged beetle, and a similar fate overtakes the old woman who prays to God.

Men returning from hunting hang animal carcasses, while another group hangs human bodies nearby. Both those and others laugh and smile, satisfied with the work done. They say that now they will not have to worry about food for a long time, and the children jump over their heads for joy. Meanwhile, a little farther away in the mountains, an armed group is advancing, blazing with the righteous wrath of retribution.

The girl asks in a whisper what happiness is, and the young man replies that happiness is not worth a dime. Together they jump off a cliff, and their broken bodies give vent to poisonous smoke that covers and kills everything around without exception - people, animals, plants, insects.

No matter how much I looked, all living things tore each other apart again and again, devoured each other, broke each other, quarreled with each other, killing and dying endlessly. Of course, among them I recognized the figures familiar to me, which have changed beyond recognition.

The radiance that was born into the world in order to become the "universal" hope, forgot about everything, becoming the embodiment of destruction. He wandered the universe, as if in search of lost memories, degrading to an entity unimaginably far from his original essence, but no one can stop him. Even though he had fallen, the youth of wonder was still unparalleled, and it was clear as daylight that he would surely become the strongest of the Demon Kings of this era.

There was another one: the daughter of my owner, Lanka, and his wife Madurai. Unable to bear the harsh reality, she chose to flee into the arms of madness. She locked herself in the world of dreams, trying to drown the past in sleep, but as a result she could not give birth to anything but nightmares. Undoubtedly, it will also remain the cause of many tragedies for a long time to come and will destroy many souls.

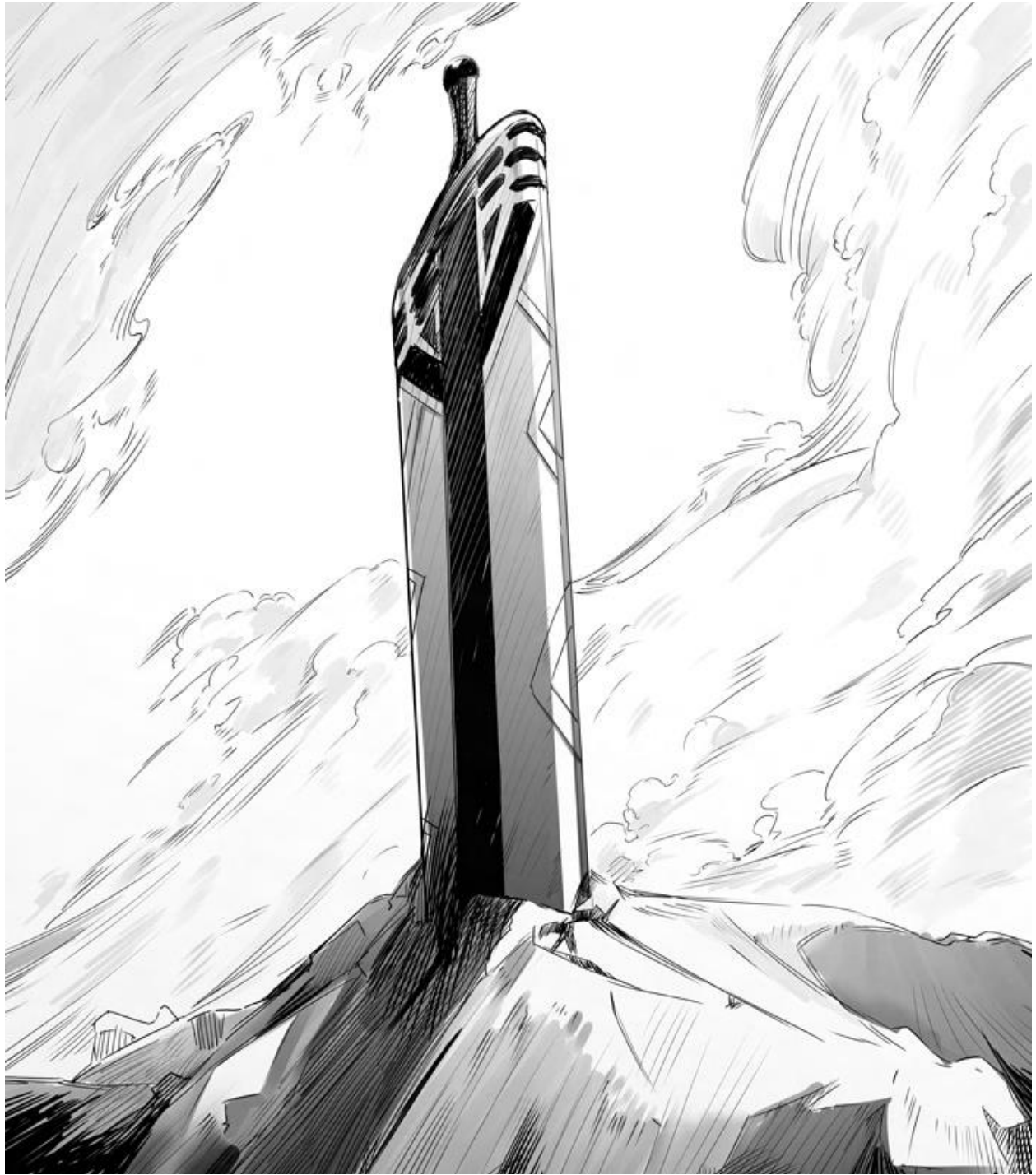
The tyranny of Nadare, which fueled this commotion, and perhaps did not allow it to subside, faded away about five hundred years later. Compared to past occasions, she calmed down a little earlier than usual, but to be honest, I don't know what the intention was behind it. Since we occupy opposite positions with her, we can say that we are farther from each other than anyone, and therefore I am not able to see through her. Because, as we swore at our parting, I decided not to worry about her behavior. I will do my best on my part.

A little over a thousand years after Nadare and I said goodbye... I finally landed on a planet. The primal chaos that always accompanies the beginning of a new game is left behind; a long era began, in which the **asuras** began to be called **yazatas**, and the **devas** were called **daevas** ... Albeit distorted, calmness returned to the world, and I began preparations for a new battle.

However, in fact, nothing has changed, and I was forced to wait further. After all, my body is an ordinary sword, and it is impossible for me to grow legs to walk on my own. To take the first step, I by default need to be found by someone with a soul.

I didn't worry too much about this. Seeing me, everything black is filled with horror and disgust, because it cannot not only touch me, but even come close to me. As an inevitable result, white flowers begin to sprout on the ground in which I am stuck, and soon the animals that feed on them gather around. Thus, a sanctuary is formed, which will sooner or later be called sacred ground.





This means that I can continue to do as I used to: intelligent life forms began to deify me, and I launched a process that I have been continuously repeating over and over again since the very creation of the world.

I absorb their pleas and become stronger. As I already mentioned, I have been gaining this strength since the very beginning of the universe, and even I myself cannot measure it. Wrapping it in an ordinary sharpness, I can cut the heavens, and if I try to save someone, then the miracles I have created are surely capable of being compared with the will of the gods. Therefore, those who praise me first want to know about my intentions.

“From what heaven did you descend to us?”

“What have you achieved and what do you desire, for what reason have you come before us?”

Of course, I can answer them. However, in order to hear my "voice" clearly enough, a sixth sense of the corresponding strength is needed. In terms of the current era, it must be a **yazata** that stands out even among his own kind. He will become my kind of priest.

As a rule, the female sex shows good compatibility with me. It is difficult for me to judge whether I have a gender, but in general terms, I can probably be called a woman. So this time, after two hundred years of waiting, the "vessel" that appeared itself turned out to be a girl. In other words, the priestess of the blade... The receptacle of the human form that will become my flesh and blood, passing my words to others. Priestesses strive for the purity of their kind, and this duty is passed down from generation to generation by inheritance.

I, in turn, act according to their will, but only when absolutely necessary and only to the right extent. I defeat **daevas**, I baptize babies, sometimes I give insights ...

Sooner or later a hero will appear. Only those who are able to use me to the fullest will be able to take me out of the earth.

“When the chosen one of fate makes itself felt, you should prostrate before him or her and offer them all your prayers.”

For hundreds of years I have reported this, and my faithful flock has humbly obeyed. So far, what is happening has exactly repeated everything that I have already done more than once or twice, but this does not mean that I was determined to follow the beaten path.

I felt a mysterious certainty. This time it's different. Without any logic, I felt that other gears were already spinning. Perhaps this was due to my suicidal thoughts, perhaps Nadare's actions, and perhaps the desire for a radiant child ...

This I do not know, but the first signal was the appearance of the black reaper.

“You came to slay me, **daeva**?”

The man who broke the border of the sacred land and appeared before me was the real herald of death. What kind of life he had lived so far could be guessed at a glance. The same murderer, about which the popular rumor goes. A man who, thanks to his **Commandment**, is able to see the future.

“Shackles of blindness, even memory lapses... Having renounced the past and the present, have you gained the ability to see everything in advance? Is that why you imagined yourself to be a judge who decides other people's destinies? I admit it's charming, but I guess you don't see my future.”

I spoke softly to the murderer, dumbfounded by his anger and horror. Of course, he was not a hero, nor did he have the power to directly harm the Divine Sword. I didn't mean it at all when I called him charming: in fact, he is nothing more than a bird of small flight, proud of his strength.

However, one cannot call him untalented in any case. In the end, he became the first representative of the black side to manage to set foot on sacred ground, and this rare property cannot be explained by mere chance.

“If you want to kill me so much, why not serve me for this?”

“I obey, here and now I have taken a new **Commandment**. From now on, I will follow your orders.”

The answer came instantly, as soon as he saw that he could not cope with me. This man immediately sank to the level of the tool, but at the same time, he felt the coldness of the damned blade. The proof of this is that his **Commandment**, in exchange for unquestioning loyalty, brings bad luck to the owner. In other words, he remains loyal to me, but at the same time he maintains his position as a **daeva**.

That's why I found it funny. That I felt this way also heralded the beginning of the downfall of the flawless **Avesta**.

“Identify yourself, O sinister man.”

“Montserrat. From now on, I will serve at your side.”

Soon my salvation and my death will overtake me. What a pleasant meeting it was that made me believe even that.

## 2

Thus I found my first master. I would like to believe that she also became my last. Since the duty that she laid on my shoulders was to ensure her death, I knew very well that I could not achieve such a goal with half my strength. To speculate about what awaits me “after” my very first and greatest work would be the height of infidelity.

After all, I was dealing with the eternal Divine Sword, the greatest weapon of the white side that has existed since the birth of the universe. As a result of our pact, I understood her memories to some extent, and I was finally filled with awe. She is not one of those for whom my feeble powers are enough, and I could only marvel at my own carelessness - and who did I think I was that I dared to challenge her?

That is why I swore to do my duty faithfully. Her death was bound to be the most wonderful performance in the universe, and every **Daeva** would have dreamed of enjoying it from the front rows in my place. In fact, I really liked this role, and therefore I decided to master it properly.

This is my truth, the truth of Montserrat.

A hundred years since I became a servant of the Divine Sword, Lady Ahura Mazda has flown by in the blink of an eye. My **Commandment**, which allows me to see into the very near future, as she guessed, stems from the renunciation of sight and memory. To be more precise, my memories cover only the events of one day. In this regard, I received a new order every morning, and although I am extremely embarrassed about the inconvenience caused by this, I was also glad that I could always give myself to my business with a fresh mind. With every sunrise I looked forward to being born again.

Therefore, I gave myself to my everyday life as a murderer with all the enthusiasm. Since my relationship with the mistress remained a secret, I did not set foot on sacred ground, but erected mountains of bodies in nearby cities and villages. From the outside, it might seem that I was eliminating potential candidates for the Divine Sword, but in fact, my goal was closer to sifting the wheat from the chaff.

So that someone inferior could not, due to a misunderstanding, be near the mistress. And, on the contrary, so that the true hero turns his gaze to this planet.

I was bound to become a terrifying, formidable disaster that is not easily overcome. I promised myself to be a great enemy that needs to be defeated, worthy of being described in a heroic epic. As far as I know, it was at this time that I received the nickname "Woodcutter". The logic is somewhat primitive, but I suppose that's why it went so far. I killed and killed and killed and killed without looking back, at times I played cat-and-mouse arrangements with the lady and frankly waited for the hero to appear.

Lady Ahura Mazda explained little to me, but I could understand that she needed someone exceptional. She expected something beyond all bounds, something that could only be described as a monster, impressive enough to break even her.

I had to determine who exactly is capable of such a thing. In other words, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the very fate of the world was entrusted to the humble person of Montserrat.

Ah, are there words in the world more disturbing?

And then one day, the mind of the lady for a moment trembled in a way that I still don't remember. If I am allowed to make a guess, I believe she said goodbye to her old acquaintance, and therefore, as I understand it, she indulged in a moment of sadness, but in reality, everything turned out differently.

Indeed, she mourned the death of a **daeva** named Bushyasta, but her true interest was directed to the one who managed to defeat her. I reasoned that in this way the mistress found a hero to whom she could give herself. So, as her servant, the only thing left for me was to invite him to this land. I suddenly became full of agility, swung a saw, as a result of which, after six, no, after about seven years ...

...That day has finally arrived.

"So you are Montserrat?"

"Exactly. And who do I have the honor to meet?"

With sacred ground on my back, I asked him politely, but of course it was only a game. I know very well who he is.

The destruction itself, which the lady desired so unbearably, that she almost dreamed of it in her delirium.

Even I, with my unarmed gaze of a vile slave, immediately realized that this man was without equal.

How dazzling. How enviable. How I long to see him and Lady Ahura Mazda fall straight into hell holding hands. Drink this despair without a trace, beat in sweet ecstasy.

“Will you understand if I say that from the Sacred Realm? I came because I heard that a particularly bad **daeva** lives on this planet, but on the way, something else was whispered in my ear. There seems to be something interesting in that castle behind you, doesn't it? To be honest, I thought it was just a fiction, but ...

“You do not want to change your mind? “

“Yeah. Since you're not letting anyone in, it's hardly just rumors. Now I'm even curious what the Divine Sword is.”

Behind him you can see more than a dozen **yazatas**, but they are clearly not going to interfere in our battle. However, they cannot be called ordinary rabble, because in fact this is a manifestation of trust in the hero to whom they have left their fate. Indeed, each of them also has remarkable talent... Ho, and one lady looks especially menacing. Glorious, gloriously, perhaps, without such an environment, a legend cannot be formed. With that thought in my chest, I take a step forward.

“My name is Varhran. Please let me through, Montserrat.”

“I'm flattered by your attention. As long as you desire the Divine Sword, you may pass if you can defeat me.”

Immediately after this, I experience a shock that is not inferior, if not more than meeting with Lady Ahura Mazda.

“You have one useful **Commandment**. See the future, right?

We hadn't exchanged blows a dozen times before Sir Varhran understood the essence of my power. Of course, not everyone is capable of this, but in itself such surprise cannot be compared with how

I found my mistress at first sight. A real chill in my soul was caused by his fighting prowess. Or rather, intuition. Or maybe it should rather be called a state of mind.

It is not for me to say this, but in the matter of one-on-one battles, I was very confident in my own abilities and did not intend to give in to anyone. After all, I could see the future a few seconds ahead. Whatever tricks my opponent had, I stopped them at the stage of "idea".

This is just as true even if, say, he could destroy the planet itself. The strength of the self, in view of its nature, first requires an appropriate intention, and if it is set aside ahead of time, then it will not achieve the desired result. Of course, an excessive difference in power would have been an insurmountable barrier, but avoiding a direct hit was not such a great achievement for me.

As a murderer, I am immortal, and therefore I can use such tactics without fear and anxiety. I was sure that even if I couldn't win, my ability to continue fighting without losing was close to perfect, and yet...

"I see, more specifically, your power is limited to what brings about the most suitable future for you? So it's all about the way you think, *and you just need to make you want to lose.*"

Sir Varhran not only recognized the truth of my **Commandment**, which was unknown even to myself, but also made an unheard-of plan to defeat me. Moreover, as if by chance, like a carefree child, he declared:

"I like it. Hand it over."

I experienced genuine horror. Fear and awe, different from, but at the same time more than equal to, those experienced by me when meeting with Lady Ahura Mazda, made me shudder from head to toe.

You may disagree with me, but I believe that the greatest greatness of all comes from "knowledge." Therefore, I wanted to understand the future, and later I began to idolize the Divine Sword, endowed with the most extensive knowledge in the universe. I will not hide that I was proud of my choice, considering it the closest to deciding fate.

However, the pinnacle of the unknown remained, and he stood right in front of me. Whether he looks at everything from heavenly heights or from underground depths, whether this face is true or not, whether his horizons are wide or narrow - I could not understand absolutely anything. However, something was clear without words: his absolute confidence in his "victory".

On what basis? I also cannot understand this. His intentions are too transparent to call him an ordinary fool, and only the unknown essence of his nature stands out in him, defines his grotesque. An indescribable monster was looking at me, and a cry escaped from my very chest.

“Oh, God - for what purpose did you put this before me? What was the result of our chance meeting?”

“— Oh-ah-ah!!!”

Involuntarily uttering a cry that was completely uncharacteristic of me, I swung the saw. Walked towards Sir Varhran, as if giving him "victory" - a blow so clumsy that I might as well present my head on a platter. I had no doubt that I would cut only the air, but for some reason everything turned out differently.

“— Kh?!”

First of all, my hit surprised me. I did not foresee such a future at all, and therefore I realized that I had already admitted my defeat and lost my **Commandment**.

“Is your strength exhausted? Seem like you are too relaxed, Montserrat.”

Chopped to the waist, but continuing to smile, the hero waved his blade, and as the defeated side, I could no longer resist him.

“Stop with such antics, Varhran. I could at least think a little about what it's like for us to look at this.”

“Don't be such a bore, Nahid. That's why I can take risks because you are behind me, ah-ah-ah!”

“Taking risks” is putting it mildly! As if you were going to splice yourself after that! “Brother, dear brother, how long are you going to lie there unconscious?”

Apparently, some time had passed, and when I came to my senses, I was already on my knees, bowing my head. At the same time, I remembered the moment that determined the outcome of the battle. A shock beyond my comprehension left my mind blank, so it's no surprise that I opened myself up to the blow. I lost my power of self, and since I myself realized my defeat, the outcome was sealed. Obviously, I narrowly escaped death, but the wounds were still in no hurry to heal.



I could feel the hero looking at me with undisguised curiosity. Lifting my blurred gaze with difficulty, I saw only the faint glow of Sir Varhran's contours, and again I realized that I had lost my **Commandment**.

This was followed by another thought. Since everything turned out like this, I would like to at least see his face. To find out where he came from and where he was going - I felt that I wanted to follow him to the very end. So, I not only admitted defeat, but also turned out to be fascinated by the hero with all my heart.

“Good morning. Does it look like you're awake?”

His carefree words were devoid of any hostility, and even in this his exclusivity was evident. Even though he was at the head of the **yazatas**, Sir Varhran never thought about the **Avesta** for a moment. The proof was also the way he happily slapped me on the shoulder, not to mention the fact that he certainly ... No, he definitely guessed everything.

“Did you... reveal my second **Commandment** as well?”

“Hmm, well, to a certain extent. You look like a real butler, so you have a master too? And he told you to test me?”

“Yes. However, now the old orders and instructions no longer matter.”

I looked the hero in the face again. Like the first time, I could only make out a vague outline, but for the time being, that will suit me. After all, someday I will see the form of his very soul.

“I swear unquestioning loyalty to you. Please let me hear your will.”

I did not regard my oath as a betrayal of the lady Ahura Mazda. After all, soon they will become associates that share the same fate for two.

I can serve two unsurpassed masters, who by definition cannot have more than one. Is there any other similar happiness in the world? At that moment, without any exaggeration, I was convinced of the meaning of my own life.

“If you tell me to die, I will cut my own throat without delay, and if you tell me to kill, then I will kill anyone. So, my lord, from now on I am nothing more than an instrument in your hands.”

The high tone of my voice caused the girl beside him to frown, but Sir Varhran himself showed no sign of being taken aback. Rather, it even amused him, as if he didn't expect anything else from

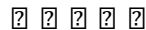
me. Did he even decide to turn the bad luck brought on by my **Commandment** in favor of his “victory”?

Ah, ah - but then how? At what stage? Here to see. Here's to find out. I can't stand how strong the desire to taste it is in me.

Intoxicated with the anticipation of the future, which is still closed to me, I opened my arms in anticipation of the words of my master ...

"Then sleep forever."

... And with gratitude I fulfilled his first order.



Since then, as I was told, I have slept deeply and have been sealed deep under the sacred ground. It should be assumed that mercy for the seriously wounded murderer caused a small squabble, but ordinary inhabitants may not hope to understand the true intentions of the master. In the end, even I am left to guess, and therefore I had little interest in how exactly this quarrel went.

However, it can be called a great success, because as a result there was no one to interfere with the fateful meeting. I have no doubt that if a third person had intervened in their conversation, my very rage would certainly have torn him on the spot. Even in a dream, I must be ready to fulfill the will of the master, and therefore to remain on the alert, sharing his point of view, was the duty of a real servant.

Thus, I had the great honor, albeit remotely, but to be present at this exciting scene. Of course, I perfectly understood my position, and therefore did not utter a word, without giving the slightest reason to even suspect my presence. I do not intend to tell anyone about the events described below.

However, I would still carry out a direct order to do this. Be that as it may, at that moment I was a model of humility, respectfully watching the conversation of my precious masters.

“You say you want me. However, is this really your own intention? Could it be that you only act as others wish, unable to resist their will?”

Lady Ahura Mazda spoke by borrowing the body of the priestess. Of course, she can communicate with her mind alone, so I was left wondering why she preferred a live voice. It may not work for everyone, but with Sir Varhran, telepathic communication should have been much more controversial.

Since the air around them had a foreign substance in my face, I had some doubts that everything would have gone so smoothly, but such impudence on the part of a servant is out of place here. I was sure that there was a good reason for this, and therefore I was busy only with the fact that I was silent and watched.

“So what, you still want to say that you want a miracle?”

“To tell you the truth, I'd rather go to sleep. Not because I'm not happy with you: rather, you're just too much like a hero. I feel that my efforts will once again be wasted...”

“That is, you know what will happen if this war continues. And judging by the wording, even from my own experience.”

“Perhaps so. However, in more detail ... “

“You can't tell, can you? Even if you want to.”

To Sir Varhran's direct behavior, Lady Ahura Mazda responded with a smile. All the details of what was happening were not available to me, but I could understand that they were united by mutual sympathy. Both of them lived up to expectations regarding each other. The Divine Sword for the hero, as well as vice versa, could become the chance that falls only once in a lifetime.

“As a child, I defeated a **daeva** named Bushyasta. She gave me all sorts of nightmares, but I still couldn't bend, so she decided to use something especially powerful, but as a result she herself went crazy. I think she had to deal with some unpleasant memories that she buried deep. I don't know what exactly they were, but I will not forget her face and the words dropped to her.”

“And what were they like?”

"So you know for sure, don't you?"

With a sad smile on his face, Sir Varhran recalled Bushyasta's last words from memory:

“Forgive me, dad, mom. Where are you, please help.”

Although her voice never wavered, Lady Ahura Mazda still looked away in pain.

“And then you understood everything?”

“Yes, I thought she survived the fall gate. Moreover, it is clearly against their will. According to the rumor in the Sacred Realm, this is what happens when you become so desperate about good or evil that you turn your back on your old way of life. But in reality, apparently, everything is not so. Whatever the reason, if she had chosen her own path, she clearly would not have become so worried. Apparently, you have seen so much of this that you are sick of everything - or am I wrong?”

“You're right.”

In this short answer, the whole palette of feelings was heard. On the shoulders of Lady Ahura Mazda is entrusted a history so ancient that I cannot even imagine. A moment later she looked up and spoke with an effort in her voice.

“I know Bushyasta quite well. She was the daughter of my long-lost owner.”

“And what happened to him?”

“He died. In other words, I cannot boast of a single victory in my account. Of course, this can also be called a kind of miracle, and yet my story remains hostage to this spiral. Therefore, I simply cannot be optimistic.”

With each word, Lady Ahura Mazda came closer and closer to the hero. At this point, I finally understood why she needed the body of a priestess. Most likely, Sir Varhran also noticed this. No, he must have guessed much earlier.

“Remember, my hero. If you are so eager to call on a lady who is not eager to obey, you need to pay an appropriate price for this.”

Lady Ahura Mazda wishes to put an end to this fruitless history. And for this, she is ready to do something that she has never tried before.

“A horror, indeed. It sounds like you're asking me to die with you.”

“Is it really so strange? Surely that was the point of such an oath. In a world where nothing is certain, we want to cling to something unchanging, and so we exchange prayers.”

“Until the death separates us. And until the unattainable distant day comes. Give the oath a tangible form, "give birth" to it physically. That is what a body of flesh and blood is needed for - nothing more than a vessel.”

“If you think I wish for my own destruction, you should also accept the destruction factor. Stain your hands with things that don't belong to you.”

Softly stating this, the priestess of the Divine Sword sank into the arms of the hero. Sir Varhran embraced her without a word, but the gesture was devoid of meekness or confusion. I have no doubt that he, too, in his manner, was already making unimaginable plans. After all, the hero has already taken the **Commandment** of Clairvoyance from me. Despite the fact that his point of view already raised only questions. Even now it is impossible to imagine how far he managed to look.

“This concludes our agreement. Oh, what a shameless act we are committing.”

Therefore, my humble person comes up with only two explanations for what happened.

The first is the creation of a certain factor, which is responsible for the apoptosis of the universe. In other words, they decided to entrust the future to their child, and let them do it in a somewhat original form, otherwise it cannot be called exemplary behavior of parents.

But the second explanation is the decision to use their own child as an expendable item, a bomb that will throw them to new heights.

Not sure if either option is correct or not. Even if there were a third or even a fourth answer, they are not obvious to me at all. Therefore, from now on, I began to consider all those who are connected by "blood" with the hero and the Divine Sword, vassals of the blade. Of course, this applies to their child, but also to the priestess, who only provided her body, as well as all her descendants without exception. Should I not honor them as my own masters?

Show me how it ends. What will be achieved by those two whom I recognized as the unique absolute of this world?

This undeserving murderer will only look forward to this day, making one wish after another, so that it comes as soon as possible.

“There must be a limit to your foolishness – are you completely out of your mind, Varhran?!”

As soon as I learned about what had happened, I was seized with anger. As if trying to suppress another feeling rising from within, I howled, literally almost tearing my throat.

“Do you even understand your position? Your life no longer belongs to you alone!”

“Be quiet... I have already heard enough of your sermons that my ears are ringing, Sirius.”

“But it's because you never listen to me!”

I grabbed my friend by the shoulders, although I realized that no arguments would help here. Maybe it really happened every time, but that's why I could not forgive him for this. This case was not one of those that can be attributed to everyday fuss.

“Marrying the priestess of the Divine Sword... Are you telling me you're leaving Nahid?”

“Well, it turns out that yes, but there is nothing wrong with that. After all, she's... “

“Shut up! Who do you take my sister for?!”

I was sure that I had time to get used to Varhran's eccentricities, but this time he clearly went too far. Nobody could have foreseen this.

The fact that we accidentally discovered the so-called Divine Sword in these lands is not so scary. That it had lived up to its reputation as a truly powerful weapon, and that it had chosen Varhran as its wielder, was more of a cause for rejoicing in itself. The fact that the ceremony of concluding a contract was reduced to a love affair with a priestess was frankly annoying, but one could somehow turn a blind eye to this.

However, a break in relations with my sister was absolutely out of the question. I was not going to accept such reasoning under any circumstances.

“Personally, I don't feel like I'm asking for anything out of the ordinary. Yes, I exchanged vows with the blade, but in fact I slept with the priestess. From her point of view, her body was played with while she was not even conscious, and the responsibility for this, it seems to me, falls on a man. The very right way that you always repeat, Sirius.”

“And you...think you can convince me like that?”

“Well, don't be so shy. You yourself understand that you are too strict, that's why you decided to talk to me in secret?”

This endurance of a real troublemaker knocked the ground from under my feet, and I let go of my friend. Here, in one of the rooms of the castle in the sacred ground of the Divine Sword... from where I drove the others out to listen to his story, my head finally started spinning.

“How many headaches do I have to endure because of you for you to calm down? That you have dishonored my sister's honor is in itself unforgivable, but there are also political propriety.”

“Is it such a big problem? If you are talking about the match between the newlyweds, then I would say that the priestess of the Divine Sword is a title that is also worthy.”

“It's all useless. You do not understand anything.”

I only had enough strength to sigh and shake my head. Varhran is right: indeed, if everything came down to the balance of the two sides, there would not be so much trouble. Although the Blade is almost unknown now, if my friend continues to perform new feats, then the radiance of his new weapon will earn great fame for himself. Legendary Hero and Legendary Divine Sword—yes, if I put aside my personal feelings, anyone would sing about such a combination.

“I will become the next Holy King.”

This issue hasn't even been voted on yet, but if it's left as it is, that **Commandment** will have to be accepted by Nahid. She will not stand the eternal memory of all the **ashavans** that are known to Vohu Mana.”

“And I don't think she's up to it.”

“That's why I can't let this happen. Think for yourself, Varhran, your relationship with Nahid has already become public. This is partly my merit, but what happens if we go against the generally accepted truth? This would certainly lead to the tragic story of how my sister turned out to be a love toy and then took on the heavy responsibility of a sacred king to forget those wounds. Indeed, perhaps it sounds touching, but this beauty is fleeting. The pathos of those who go towards their death. It doesn't sound like a script that leads to a flawless epilogue.”

“I... will not tolerate tears from anyone close to me. More specifically, I want to put an end to the misconception that tears are admirable.”

Tears are not a good sign. Something that does not need to be shed, if the desired can be achieved without it.

“A system of values in which tears are considered beautiful is only a means to withstand a situation where one cannot live without them. In a society where everyone takes this for granted, there can be neither real peace nor victory.”

“Then what are you going to do with the tears the priestess is shedding now?”

“It’s enough for me to make it look like they never existed.”

I answered without the slightest hesitation, and something in Varhran's gaze immediately changed. However, right after that, he only sighed wearily.

“Looks a lot like you. Let me just say a few words, Sirius.”

With an air of pity for me, my friend slowly continued:

“Of course, this is just my opinion, but I think that you are just desperately inventing a reason why you have to fix everything. Since you are talking about the means of enduring something there, don't you think that you yourself are going along with them?”

“...”

“I don't really like tears myself and would rather not have them. After all, even my stubborn buddy is actually a crybaby.”

“You just think.”

I answered briefly and turned my back on him. In any case, this conversation has come to an end.

“Are you going to her?”

“Yes, I will execute the priestess. If you want to stop me, kill me first.”

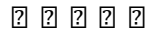
I said this with sincere determination, but Varhran turned neither words nor sword on me. There is no doubt that he recognized my weakness. I realized that a worthless man named Sirius is not even capable of killing one woman for the sake of a great goal.

And indeed, I not only did not execute the priestess, but also made her an offer to become my wife ... It's not for me to talk about it, but such a thing only causes tired amazement. I was told that I impose my own means on everyone, and although, perhaps, everything is so, I involuntarily wonder what my true goal is - and I cannot give an answer ...



I am a figure made of paper, nothing is certain, and it is possible that this is why I am trying to patch holes in the dream of my consummate friend. In the end, I don't have anything of my own.

This is all limited. My talents are not enough for more.



Whatever thoughts a petty person thinks, his conclusions will be painfully superficial, and reality will now and then cynically mock him. This is how this world works, and therefore the difficulties surrounding the Divine Sword did not even think of stopping.

Priestess Quinn was carrying a child. Without a doubt, his father was Varhran, but the main question was who - no, "what" should be called his mother?

In terms of heredity, it was definitely Quinn, but when she swore the oath to Varhran, her body was in the power of the Divine Sword. But then how exactly should this situation be interpreted?

Although common sense would dictate that Quinn be the mother, the events leading up to this were too far from the norm. It is possible that this is exactly what the Divine Sword wanted when she seduced my friend, and from such a point of view, their child cannot be considered human at all. This is a strange, foreign something, and such a bad sign should be eliminated in advance.

However, I never managed to tell her to get rid of the fetus, and I felt that Quinn herself was also tormented by doubts. Even though from her point of view, this creature had taken up residence inside her without her knowledge, and yet the beating of a tiny heart caused a surge of emotions in her. As soon as her maternal instincts reminded of herself, she began to treat him with love. Since we were already in a relationship, I didn't want the bewildered girl to sob uncontrollably in front of me.

Varhran ran forward, not even thinking about my worries. The Divine Sword was actually an order of magnitude superior to any other weapon, and my friend shone with a frightening brightness, rushing ever to new and new heights.

Needless to say, why I could not announce the origin of the blade despite such a glorious march. Such a sacred treasure cannot be accidentally found lying in a field, and anyone would think that

there must be a kind that idolizes it. And therefore, no matter how skillfully I covered my tracks, sooner or later conversations about history would have reached a person named Quinn, and there it would have turned out that she was carrying a certain child in her womb.

First of all, anyone will probably think that this is the heir of Varhran. It was impossible to exclude the possibility that some strategist among the **Drujvants** would distort our relations outrageously and put them on display, which would have a detrimental effect on our morals.

In such a position, unable to kill the mother along with the child, there was only one way I could do. Send the newborn to unknown lands and hide its origin in the darkness.

The only ones who knew the truth were the three of us, who were directly involved in the events, as well as a few maids who cared for Quinn on sacred ground. Of course, I didn't even tell Nahid about it, and therefore I was sure that I had successfully hidden everything, when suddenly an unexpected - and maybe quite natural - problem appeared on my way.

Varhran said that he wants to adopt the child at home. I was completely unaware that he was capable of experiencing some kind of fatherly feelings, but in this case he was adamant. It helped that he wanted to raise him like an older brother, and that the circumstances made it possible. Although my friend's father was not distinguished by noble origin, he was a sociable **yazata**, and besides, he just joined the ranks of the dead. Since we always take the number anyway, polygamy within reasonable limits is not prohibited, and therefore it was possible to refer to the fact that this is just an illegitimate son left by him ...

I couldn't find a way to make Varhran change his mind, so I took advantage of his offer. His plan also had good sides, because in the immediate vicinity it was easier to observe the child, and perhaps in the end it was the right decision.

The child's name was Magsarion... A real child of fate, who was destined to go against established norms.

❓ ❓ ❓ ❓ ❓

And now, when I have lost everything and can only frantically stand still, I shed tears, looking at the sad sight in front of me.

“Dance and walk around, pure supplication... Stand up and fight, youths of goodness... This is our sacred oath, the **Avesta** given to everyone and everyone...

My friend... My dream and my hope, the universal hero whom I loved as an eternally obnoxious younger brother! He met a death as dirty and ugly as no one could even imagine. Seeing this, my sister lost her peace of mind and looks out the window with glassy eyes, wandering through the world of dreams.

“How beautiful is the brilliance of your blade... You give me the light of hope with your courage...”

The string of her words was once a joyful hymn that sounded throughout the sacred realm. The words and music written by Nahid had a mysterious power that really kindled the fighting spirit in our warriors more than once.

However, from now on, the song of the Star Princess does not carry blessings. The great man who should be at the head of all is no more. Only I remained, pathetic, powerless and incapable of anything.

“I see a wonderful dream, so show me ... So that the cherished day comes soon ...”

The gaze of my broken sister is directed to the child, which can be called a parting gift from my friend.

Do you place your hopes on him, Nahid?

It's useless, it's useless, it's all useless. Watch how he clumsily swings. You can't see a grain of talent in him. How can you see him as the heir of a hero, when there are doubts even if he will be able to become a **yazata**?

Moreover, he is shrouded only in malice, ferocious enough to make one's hair stand on end. Hatred, bloodlust, resentment with a black flame comes from the child.

“...When your beautiful blade becomes the light of all.”

It's not like that, Nahid. You may not know this, but this is nothing more than a brat that initially carries a non-human factor in itself. Yes, you yourself should have seen that what is not born of man is doomed to become a monster, no matter how it resists. Even back when we fought the past fourth Demon King. When we broke into his lair, I took it upon myself to rescue subjects and

civilians. After all, that Demon King was a full-fledged beast, devoid of reason, and his fanaticism surpassed anyone else, wasn't it?

"Because... that time I was ready to see something ugly. Gnawed remains, defiled remains - whatever it was, I had no doubt that I would see real mountains of corpses ... but, as it turned out, I was too naive.

When I made my way into its nest, in the miasma of the vast cavern my eyes were revealed to something that easily surpassed my pathetic imagination.

Only the women survived. Dozens, hundreds of women, all without exception with severed limbs, torn out tongues, naked ... Because of their erratic swarming, it even seemed to me that it was a flock of insects. And all of them, without exception, lay with swollen bellies, pregnant.

Why am I talking about this? After all, nobody listens to me. It's been left behind for a long time. Stupidity, nonsense. I sincerely think so, but I still continue to speak, unable to stop.

The despair I felt was worse than death. They could neither escape from that lair nor call for help while the monsters raped them day after day. What did they eat? Don't ask, it's already clear. They were all out of their minds to the last, and it seemed that I was also about to say goodbye to reason, and yet I managed to understand the little that they wanted.

"Kill us."

Therefore, releasing all the subjects and left alone ...

"I pierced them. Pierced them. Pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, told himself it was the duty of a holy king, and pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced. Then hairy clots of flesh began to crawl out of their bellies, many-headed green centipedes covered with monkey scales ... A variety of monsters attacked me, but I pierced them too. Chopped, torn, beaten, crushed, killed and killed until there was no one left... Hahaha, no wonder I never received the gift of the Divine Sword. Where do I go, so worthless, so stupid."

Ahura Mazda grants special power to those who go into battle with it for a long time. Alone, we have always been weak, but with this miracle we could compete with a high- rank **daeva**. The phenomenon of strengthening vassals. As an inevitable result, more and more people surrounded by Varhran received this gift, and it stubbornly avoided only one man ...

Even though I was most fascinated by it, even though I walked this path side by side with the hero for the longest time, and yet a miracle did not descend on me like that. And no wonder. From the very beginning, I shunned and cursed the Divine Sword. To the one who seduced my friend with inedible tales, gave birth to an ominous offspring and cast a shadow over the entire Sacred Realm, I feel nothing but hatred.

And yet, if we win... If she managed to bring us victory, I would put up with anything, but she did not fulfill even this most sincere prayer and sent my friend to the next world.

“I... can’t forgive this. This discomfort that seems to stick to me. It is not at all like the warmth that you bestowed on me that time.”

Along with these words, I let out a dry laugh at myself. Even now I try to hide my true intentions. After killing all the unfortunate women in the lair of the fourth Demon King, I stood in oblivion when Nahid hugged me from behind. And although it did heal the deep wounds in my soul, why did I experience horror at the same time?

I don't want to know what its meaning is, so I locked my sister in a cage of frozen time. Now that Varhran is gone, I'm afraid to deal with Nahid. Therefore, to be frank, it was much calmer for me to give her into captivity of the distorted world. It is vicious, inhuman and unbearable, but at least it does not cause fear.

“This whole world is wrong, as if a mad mother has enclosed it in her arms. I give you my word that I will do everything to defeat her. Sleep, and let you dream of a new world.”

Hiding behind my means, I stopped Nahid's time. At the last moment, my sister's gaze slowly turned in my direction, as if smiling, laughing, mocking ...

No, I just thought. Confused by an indescribable horror, I recoil, turn my back on her, and walk out of the room.

“Ah, Quinn...My wife, I wish to meet you as soon as possible.”

Covering my face with my hands, I run as the words escape my mouth in a breathless voice. Even under pain of death, I will not be able to say that I love you, and yet I continue to pray that you are alone ...

Now that I've lost everything, abandoned by everyone, you are my last refuge. A tool that nothing can replace.

With all my heart I ask you not to leave me alone, but I do not have the opportunity to verify your well-being ...

I learned of her death three years later. The fact that our daughter became the new Demon King, I realized ten years later.

### **Chapter 13: To love only you**

#### **1**

My first impression of him was the worst. Even though he spoke to me with a smile, he was easily ignored, and his outstretched hand waved unattractively. Inevitably, he was dumbfounded, and then, stepping on the ground with the anger that welled up, he decided that he would absolutely forgive.

Some would argue that it is to that extent. But she was five at the time. She had grown up in good health with her loving parents, and because she had never met her, she had an innocent faith in the beauty of the world.

Therefore, it can't be helped that I felt that I had been severely betrayed and that I was hurt. Her shocking experience, which could be said to be the first setback in her life, left a deep impression on her ever since.

If it was blatant malice directed at the other party, the story would have been different. I'm sure they immediately started quarreling, and even if it wasn't a bad encounter, it would have been a rather common episode between children.

However, in reality, it wasn't even a refusal, and the way he acted like he didn't look at others from the beginning was too mysterious, and I couldn't understand it and it stuck in the back of my throat.

“What did I do to deserve this? Why is he treating me like this?”

Until she found answers to these questions, she vowed not to let him off the hook. Consequently, she resorted to taunting him, pouring her genuine intensity into it. However, she was never capable of true malice.

While others showered the boy, who refused to cooperate with anyone, with reproaches and lectures about the importance of harmony, and teachers lost hope in teaching him anything, only she waged a solitary battle to make him recognize his surroundings. When things reached a boiling point, she openly challenged him. Yet, even in this act, her dignity shone through, for she never resorted to underhanded tactics. In truth, what others saw as "bullying" from the outside resembled more a model of care for her fellow human being.

Despite his consistent disregard for her, which only fueled her anger, she persisted every single day.

Two years after their initial meeting, she distanced herself from him somewhat, not out of surrender or fatigue, but because she painfully realized that she had been wasting her energy. It was time to contemplate the next step. She wasn't inclined to change her direct approach, as it went against her character. However, if challenging him to a fight wasn't feasible, then what other options remained?

Perhaps, she thought, she could try being kinder to him. She believed that his behavior stemmed from a lack of belief from others, and she could fill that role. Maybe his mischievousness would diminish, even if it required her to show sympathy. But it wasn't an easy task, as she didn't know how to lie. Moreover, she had to consider the implications of their relationship if she succeeded. These thoughts consumed her as she pondered her new predicament.

"Do you have feelings for him?"

That's what the older brother of the boy she despised asked her, a universally acclaimed hero whose exploits were already known even to her. She considered it an honor that he addressed her, but his words felt utterly inappropriate.

The shame burned within her, and her face flushed instantly. Especially since her everyday struggles were, to a large extent, due to the fact that the esteemed hero had abandoned his role as guardian.

Adults are utterly useless, she thought, frustrated that they didn't take her seriously just because she was a child. She was merely standing up for herself out of dignity. Her superiority was clear to her, and she justified her actions as a means to save face. In reality, it could be deemed a battle, driven by an impulsive surge of emotions, in which she aimed to make him notice her. She longed

for him to acknowledge her presence, to become something he couldn't ignore. Thus, she firmly believed that this wasn't a saccharine-sweet first love, but a duel where her honor was at stake. However, it didn't take long for her to realize the naivety of her belief.

"What... are you doing here anyway?" she questioned, her voice barely audible due to her helplessness.

In the midst of the despair that I thought my family and friends had completely lost, and that even my tears had dried up, there was a scene that still caught my eye.

The boy—— Magsarion was the only one silently swinging his sword.

“Are you stupid... What will you achieve with that?

Her words resonated with the truth. One swing of the sword couldn't undo the havoc wreaked upon their shared reality. Though she couldn't witness the demise of the Sacred Realm and its hero, it was not hard to imagine.

And even his swings themselves were agonizing to watch. His unstable stance shifted his center of gravity, causing his entire body to waver from side to side, while the sword itself was too large for him. The burden, ill-suited to his physique, led to unsightly convulsions, a sight she, as a model student, could only deem an unimaginable disgrace.

He hadn't achieved anything yet. The boy, who couldn't even be considered a loser, had chosen this moment to display his agility, seemingly determined to showcase his bad temper. Frankly, it was disheartening to witness. Yet, no new reproaches came from her, and she couldn't depart with a weary smile.

Because she knew he was serious.

There was no room for hesitation beneath his feet as he relentlessly trampled the ground, propelling himself forward, obliterating any opposition. His shoes were tattered and worn, and both his bare feet were drenched in blood up to his ankles. His hands fared no better. The skin had peeled off completely, hanging from his forearms, and several fingers were broken.

Still, the boy pressed on. Occasionally, blood oozed from his mouth, as if he were biting down too hard or had injured his tongue. His nose and ears also bled, mingling with sweat and dust, making



him a truly terrifying sight. Like an infernal creature spawned from the depths of hell, consumed by bloodlust and hatred, he wielded his sword, again and again.

Strangely, the girl found it beautiful, and in that moment, Alma finally understood.

"I just despise you. You do as you please. You're impossible to understand... Always alone, yet seemingly content with it, dragging me along all the while, as if cursing me."

Tears streamed down her cheeks, the warmth of her sorrow evident. She was captivated by him, and she knew it would only lead to her ruin. Without a doubt, her future held no semblance of tenderness or tranquility; it would be a cruel demise. And the fact that she felt a certain pride in this realization served as undeniable proof of her deviation.

"Yes, that's enough for me. You don't have to look at me; I'll be the one watching you."

She accepted her fate, even if it meant withering away in the depths of despair. However, the facts remained— she had met him, and she had seen him. Since destiny had decreed that this curse, this resurrected soul, crossed her path, she was prepared to traverse even the depths of hell on Earth.

From now on, her life belonged to him.

"Magsarion, I..."

A gust of wind from another swing drowned out the remainder of her sentence, but that prayer imprinted itself upon her heart. Since he had ignited the flame of her existence, she would live and die solely for him.

This, she knew, was her happiness, an oath she would never betray.



Alma's eyes widened as she woke up from a vivid memory, one that felt too recent to be considered a thing of the past.

Her spacious bedroom, adorned with expensive furniture, appeared chaotic and messy, a stark contrast to her reputation as a proper and correct girl. But this was the truth about Alma, her

approach to important matters was meticulous, while less significant things were often left to chance. Cleaning her room fell into the latter category, and she seemed unconcerned about the accumulated dust or the presence of insects that would alarm most girls. One could argue that this was a deliberate choice on her part, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about her character. At the very least, she found solace in the simplicity of her dreams, free from any embellishments. Since she had no desire to bother with cleaning, she entrusted such tasks to the servants, a privilege afforded by her position.

Alma was now the beloved concubine of Kaikhosru, and as one of the twelve lords of the Sacred Realm, she held a prestigious status.

"Kh..." she muttered sleepily as she rolled off the bed, her face still carrying traces of drowsiness.

Navigating through the cluttered room, she made her way to the adjacent washroom and then to the pristine bathroom. Here, unlike her bedroom, everything was meticulously organized, reflecting her belief that taking care of her appearance was a practical necessity for survival. It was akin to preparing for battle, akin to tending to a valuable weapon. The stark contrast between the two rooms symbolized this transition.

From dull ugliness to tense beauty. In other words, from private to battlefield. The gap between the two rooms represented such a switch.

Alma carefully polishes her limbs, as she has always done. Her bathroom was a small one for a single person, and although it was far from modest from her current point of view, she didn't seem to care in the slightest. She even thought that it should be like this, so she took the trouble to order it.

A kind of sanctuary. In the same way that craftsmen are fussy about the construction of their workshops, useless decorations that hinder concentration have been abolished.

"Although, I was still in a state where I couldn't completely calm myself down."

The cause is internal, regardless of the surroundings. Alma silently continued "maintenance" while recalling the flow of events leading up to this point.

Already three months have passed since that great war, in which almost all forces gathered together, and unimaginable developments continued. While Alma herself hadn't played a significant role in the whirlwind of events, the tumultuous days that followed made up for it. After the hostilities ceased, the Sacred Realm and the Dragon Husk Star were forcibly thrust into a new sector of space known as Nadare's Fractured World. If left alone, it would have been inevitable to be swallowed by the convulsions of the Workshop of Annihilation, so that itself doesn't matter. Though it was disheartening to rely on the spoils of the enemy, Alma chose not to dwell on it. However, the real troubles began afterward.

The alliance between Sirius and Kaikhosru was still continuing, and as if to prove that fact, the fusion of the planets deepened. Of course, Alma cannot have a perspective from space, but the Sacred Realm and the Dragon Husk Star are now almost completely transformed into one celestial body. On a map, the former area is surrounded by the latter.

Alma couldn't fathom the theory or practice behind such a fortunate combination of circumstances, but it presented a multitude of questions that required negotiations. Alma had been entrusted with the management of the new continent formed from the collision of the two planets. In other words, she juggled the roles of concubine and lord, serving as a living symbol of the union. To deem this role important would be an understatement, and it was understandable that she approached her responsibilities with difficulty.

Currently, she was occupied with preparing for the signing ceremony of the treaty between Sirius and Kaikhosru, set to take place on the new mainland in five days. It was hard to imagine that they would merely exchange written agreements, but the presence of the two kings side by side was a sight the people needed to witness.

This event was poised to surpass the grandeur of Veretragna, demanding Alma's constant preparation day and night. For the past three months, she hadn't even had the chance to develop a proper city plan. Sirius and Kaikhosru had exerted their influence over the geography, creating a temporary meeting place. Thus, she didn't have to worry about roads, but constructing an entire city required different efforts.

Urgently developing the allocated lands became Alma's priority, necessitating the provision of all necessary amenities and security for the builders. Most of the workers were recruited from the Dragon Husk Star, while provisions and resources were collected from various parts of the Sacred

Realm. Yet, even amidst the bureaucratic procedures, sleep was a luxury she couldn't afford. Today alone, she had dozens of scheduled meetings, leaving her with little time for respite.

"Ah, yes, what is it..." she sighed, half-cursing, as she stepped out of the tub.

She hadn't entirely forsaken her self-care routine but had minimized it. She opted for minimal makeup, and in retaliation, she randomly selected an outfit from the dressing room, filled with gifts meant for Kaikhosru. Slipping her hands into the sleeves and adjusting her shoulders, she made her way to the office. She recognized the immense importance of the matter at hand, but she couldn't help but feel that it wasn't the right time for such things. Doubts clouded her mind, wondering if things would truly get better. Alma's emotions grew even more muddled when she laid eyes on the guest awaiting her.

"Hi, how are you?" the girl nonchalantly greeted, seated at the table, sipping tea.

With a smile, she raised her hand in greeting. Alma didn't bother to conceal her annoyance and frowned openly.

"Roxanne, what do you want?"

"Well, you have quite the warm welcome. Can't I be concerned about my dear little sister? To take a look at her and see how she's doing?"

"Little sister..."

Those two words scratched against Alma's ears like nails on a chalkboard. It felt like she was being taunted, and it certainly seemed that way.

"Your excessive kindness is truly flattering, dear older sister. I hope you derive great satisfaction from it so you can leave quickly. You're nothing but a hindrance."

"Oh, oh, oh. Someone's in a sour mood today, Armochka."

"I've already warned you, not to call me that."

Alma brushed her off like an annoying fly, but Roxanne maintained the same smile on her face. Alma found it hard to believe that this woman, who seemed so carefree, was a Daeva. Upon closer inspection, a slight unease could be sensed, but it wasn't enough reason for hostility. Nonetheless, Alma sighed and decided to engage in conversation reluctantly.

"Fine, I'll entertain you since you seem desperate for someone to talk to. It's the easiest way to get rid of you, and perhaps you'll answer a few of my questions."

A significant portion of her thoughts revolved around Roxanne and sharing them might alleviate some of her burdens. She wasn't particularly fond of Roxanne, but an optimist might see this as a good opportunity. Alma took her seat at the desk beside the Dragon Jewel Princess. She was well aware of the vast difference in their strength, and in a

full-blown fight, Alma would be defeated in an instant. However, she couldn't fathom such a scenario due to her instincts, not solely because her sister was disguised as an **Ashavan**.

"Pour me some tea. I might regret not wetting my throat now."

"Very well, I'll pour a cup."

And so, the two girls, who indeed appeared like sisters to an outsider, embarked on their lighthearted conversation.

"The Sacred Realm supplies you with resources in exchange for gifts to Kaikhosru, correct?"

"Well, yes, why not? I can decide what to do with my possessions once they've been bestowed upon me."

"Indeed, it's international trade."

"The people from the Dragon Husk Star are still suffering from hunger and thirst. Their plight has led to an increasing influx of migrants. However, as long as I'm responsible for them, I won't entertain any complaints from you. As a concubine, my authority should suffice."

"Yes, I observed that before coming here. As long as their work is compensated with food and shelter, the children have no choice but to work hard. At least, we'll manage to build the stage for the signing ceremony."

"That's good to hear."

"Why do you fret over trivial matters, Armochka? By the way, did you know that the mainland has been given a name?"

"No, I wasn't aware."

"Arnavak."

"Why my last name?"

"Well, you're in charge of everything here, aren't you?"

"Is that so... your doing, Roxanne?"

"Oh, you guessed it? I thought it would please you. I expect great things from you, Mistress Arnavak."

"If you can't speak seriously, it's better to remain silent."

Thus, the exchange of their current state of affairs concluded without much incident, and this time, it was Alma who broke the silence.

"I want to know how your **Commandment** works."

A similar ability to deceive, as dictated by the Avesta, to recognize belonging. Alma already had a general understanding, and even if she didn't, there was little point in asking about it now. However, before delving into the main topic, she wanted to see if she could coax Roxanne into revealing some of her secrets personally.

"The scope, like mine, bear a striking resemblance, yet they unfold in unique patterns, unlikely to replicate my own experiences exactly. As for the effect they hold... Shall we delve into it further?"

"Very well," Roxanne responds with a nonchalant nod, embarking on an explanation.

"The bonds we share are not merely similar but rather diametrically opposed. I am bound to solitude, unable to form connections with anyone," she begins, her voice tinged with a touch of resignation.

Perplexed, I inquire, "What do you mean?"

"I have taken a **Commandment** of chastity," Roxanne reveals, her words weighted with the gravity of such prohibitions.

"These restrictions are incredibly challenging for us. However, if you're asking whether I am still a virgin, alas, that is not the case."

Even when she captured the Sahnnavak clan, she never bore a child of her own. Instead, she clandestinely adopted one, a secret she guards closely.

"Perhaps it would be easier to understand if I were to say that, in exchange for a life of celibacy, I possess a peculiar charm," she explains. "Those around me let their guard down, their vigilance wanes. I can subjugate **Drujvants**, and you can dampen the **Avesta's** instincts."

"And yet... you have the freedom to choose which side to align with?"

"Indeed, in fact, I've recently chosen to walk a path of equilibrium, a fifty-fifty balance."

White, black, and grey... By selecting between these three attributes, or rather, options for her charm, Roxanne gains corresponding strengths and weaknesses. When she embodies the white aspect, she is considered a master of Haoma, while in her black form, her power increases manifold, worthy of a **Daeva** of a special rank. And now, in her grey state, she can wield both aspects with mediocre proficiency.

"When the Locusts invaded the Sacred Realm, I could not afford to be fully committed to either side in Samluk's presence. Moreover, I was forbidden from revealing myself until our kings met."

"If anything, I still feel a pang of sorrow for her. I raised such hopes, and it's a pity."

"Let it be. I believe that is how Samluk found her happiness in the afterlife," I offer, sympathizing with the memory of my departed friend.

Though their time together was brief, Alma recognizes the essence of Samluk's character— a person who remained true to herself and fearlessly charged forward until the end. While a twinge of sadness lingers, Alma understands it would be inappropriate to pity such a **Yazata**. Should she attempt it, she would likely face a fierce response in their next encounter. Resolving to change the mood, Alma steers the conversation towards the main

topic. She chooses her words with care, aiming to extract the information that piques her curiosity the most.

"How did you and Kaikhosru meet? You mentioned something earlier, about... well, you know."

"That I'm not a virgin and so forth? He is my first and last man." Roxanne responds, causing a blush to tint Alma's cheeks.

It is hard to deny that those words stirred something within her. If Roxanne's initial confession holds true, then she must have taken her Commandment after meeting Kaikhosru. This suggests that she made the choice to live for him. Such determination resonates with Alma, as they share

certain similarities, even in the depths of their beings. She hopes to draw parallels, seeking to find common ground. Undoubtedly, this holds significance for both of them.

"I am aware that you have known each other for over two hundred years. However, I lack concrete details, so I would appreciate hearing everything you can tell me."

Roxanne smirks at Alma's earnestness before nodding and refilling her teacup. Taking a sip, she begins her tale, and from the very first words, an unexpected jolt electrifies the air.

"To begin with, he was once an **Ashavan**, nearly four hundred years ago."

Alma is left speechless, frozen in astonishment, which is entirely expected. After all, she has never heard of the sixth Demon King passing through the Collapse. Even in his present position, it is difficult to fathom such a transformation. Roxanne, on the other hand, seems to relish the reaction of her "little sister," continuing her narrative in a smooth, nostalgic tone.

"You do know that Dragon Crystal Star, or rather, what it was called before its capture, was the planet of the **Ashavans**? Essentially, it was a sacred kingdom where the **Drujvants** were not permitted. The only difference was the allowance of a small taint of darkness. Care to guess why?"

Caught off guard by the direct question, Alma struggles to find an answer. Roxanne's assertion rings true: the Sacred Realm was a planet solely owned by the **Ashavans**. Although the current situation may be convoluted, any land ruled by a benevolent Star Spirit inherently veers towards purity. So why did the former Dragon Star deviate from this norm?

"In essence, they were used as scapegoats," Roxanne says succinctly, her tone lacking any trace of bitterness.

"When problems arose, it was convenient to have someone to blame and punish. And I happened to be one of them, born into that role."

"So... there were others. How many?"

Alma manages to utter, her voice barely a whisper.

"Eighteen."

There were precisely as many **Drujvants** as Kaikhosru's concubines. Alma's mouth hangs open in astonishment, while Roxanne's response remains unwavering. There were only eighteen **Drujvants** across the entirety of the **Ashavans'** planet. Alma cannot gauge whether this number is



significant or insignificant. Nevertheless, the fact that such a system existed raises questions about the equilibrium it sought to establish.

"And you humbly accepted such a fate?"

"Well, there was no room for jokes, to put it lightly. Yet, I couldn't fight back simply because I was too weak," Roxanne explains.

According to her account, all the **Drujvants** accepted onto the planet were inherently feeble. Although they possessed relative biological advantages, they were unable to withstand the might of several men with weapons. In essence, they were akin to hunted beast, and Roxanne can't help but chuckle at the realization of their limitations.

"Nevertheless, as you understand, life on planets governed by white stars is not without accidents, diseases, or even natural disasters. Consider the two of us, sitting here, our cells living and dying in their own natural rhythm," Roxanne remarks. "If a mere sneeze can awaken a volcano, it becomes difficult to conceive of a world where everything remains in perpetual bliss. However, the great dragon deity was a perfectionist and desired to alleviate the anxieties and dissatisfactions of his children as much as possible."

"And for that, he required **Drujvants**?" Alma interjects, her voice tinged with skepticism.

"Yes, it was all just a facade."

Roxanne's tone remains light-hearted, void of any malice, but an eerie sensation permeates the room. Essentially, the situation mirrors the lives of **Ashavans** living under the dominion of a black Star Spirit on Earth. To ensure the ruling class of the planet could live carefree lives, they needed the presence of the disadvantaged, whom they could conveniently exploit. The results speak for themselves, and yet Alma finds this approach dishonorable. Perhaps her perspective on even the rule of a benevolent Star Spirit has shifted in some way. She can't be certain, but there's an innate desire within her to hear more from Roxanne.

"It's quite astounding that you managed to survive."

"To be precise, they didn't want me to perish easily. After all, I served as an outlet for their frustrations, so they slowly and tenderly tormented me. Whenever they captured me, I would be crucified in a prominent place, and when things didn't go as planned, they would pelt me with

stones or poke me with stakes. They pushed the boundaries of cruelty, meticulously managing their resources."

"No need to describe it so grimly... So, when they crossed that line, they sought a replacement for the vacant position?"

"Perhaps. I never really had time to contemplate what would happen after my departure... I wonder how long it lasted. Though, I don't think it went on for too long," Roxanne muses, her gaze fixed on the distance as a meaningful smile emerges on her lips.

"...I distinctly remember something... No, that's where my memories begin. The moment I met him."

She recalls a young man who gazed silently from beneath furrowed brows at the defenseless, pitiful **Drujvant** subjected to universal mockery. That was Kaikhosru in those days.

Trembling with trepidation, Alma cautiously poses her question.

"Did he decide to help you?"

Roxanne's gaze lingers on the horizon, a mixture of reminiscence and a wistful smile playing on her lips. She takes a moment to respond, her voice tinged with a hint of sorrow.

"No, quite the opposite. He treated me even worse than the others. He picked up a large stone and hurled it at me with all his might, striking me squarely in the face. I couldn't help but think, 'How shameful, attacking someone defenseless.'"

She was meant to be kept as a captive for as long as possible, but he broke the rules by attacking her with clear intent to kill. The other **Ashavans** scolded the young man and forcibly dragged him away from the "precious sacrifice" to prevent further harm. But he never relented. Day after day, he returned, inflicting even more pain upon her, despite their attempts to keep him away.

Initially, his actions only angered her, but over time, a strange shift occurred within her. She found herself waiting for him, even finding some twisted solace in his visits. It may sound peculiar, but she began to see him as a savior, eagerly anticipating the next act of cruelty. Until finally, he orchestrated a true spectacle—he decided to set her on fire. Under the cover of night, Kaikhosru stealthily approached the crucified victim, stunning the guards. He arranged a pile of firewood and ignited it. The wind carried the flames, transforming the pitiful **Drujvant** into a fiery inferno,

painting her in shades of crimson. Roxanne, lacking formidable strength at the time, had no escape from the scorching blaze.

"I felt the heat, the pain, and the terror," Roxanne recounts, her voice quivering with the memory. "But amidst it all, I experienced a strange sense of relief. So, I decided to express my gratitude. It seemed he had finally achieved what he desired, and I laughed at our twisted symbiosis. But then, he contorted his face into a horrifying grimace. It was as if he were witnessing something unbearable, screaming with bulging eyes."

"Why?" he shouted, the question hanging in the air.

"What do you mean?" I asked, bewildered by his reaction through her recollection.

"Nothing is clear, is it? I didn't understand either, and I was about to inquire further, but time ran out for me. I realized that the world owed me no explanations—it was no longer my concern. And then, I witnessed the Collapse."

At that very moment, Kaikhosru plummeted, his descent abrupt and unexpected.

Alma, visibly perplexed, urges Roxanne to share what she knows—the facts that she herself is aware of.

"Every **Ashavan** of the Dragon Crystal Star was bound by a **Commandment** to obey the rule of the Star Spirit. It dictated that they would find joy in mocking people like me. Kaikhosru defied this **Commandment**, thus violating its sacred essence," Roxanne explains.

"So... the Collap serves as a punishment for willingly breaking the Commandment?"

"Indeed, that seems to be the crux of it," Roxanne affirms. "As far as I know, His Majesty Sirius is aware of other instances, but this is the only one I'm familiar with. It follows a certain logic, doesn't it? Deny your very nature, and you transform into something entirely different."

"But..." Alma begins, her voice trembling with uncertainty.

Sensing her fear, Roxanne interrupts, her words laced with a hint of urgency. Alma's world seems on the verge of crumbling, and she cannot allow that.

"There is no record of a Collapse occurring on the Dragon Husk Star. If it did happen some four hundred years ago, maybe a bit earlier, why didn't Vohu Mana take notice?"

"And does it matter? I told you, the esteemed Dragon God was a perfectionist. Perhaps he chose to conceal it. Maybe he had no desire for lectures from particularly vocal acquaintances."

"....."

"However, that choice turned out to be a failure. Kaihothru, who fell, became a powerful creature that shouldn't have been born on that planet. After that, Alma-chan knows as well."

It was lightly refuted, but surely Roxanne is right about this matter. She didn't think she was lying, so the remaining question becomes a mystery.

What had he been trying to achieve?

What was beyond his comprehension?

A fleeting image of a boy wielding a sword, a figure from her childhood, flashes through Alma's mind.

Men, she reflects, are so straightforward yet shrouded in enigma. Could it be her destiny to grapple with such enigmas?

"How well do you know Kaikhosru?"

"As much as Armochka knows Magsarion."

"How well do you know Kaikhosru?"

"About as well as you know Magsarion," Roxanne promptly responds, brimming with confidence.

Alma, involuntarily, falls into silence. Roxanne's answer implies that she knows next to nothing. Yet despite this knowledge gap, Alma feels compelled to follow him. She and Roxanne are kindred spirits, united by the curse of zealous men. Both bewitched and awakened from a state of living death, they have pledged their lives to one another. The Dragon Jewel Princess, an advocate of neutrality, may seem eccentric at first glance, but Kaikhosru always lies at the heart of her actions. Roxanne may be reluctant to admit it, but Alma shares a similar origin and plea, which she keenly senses. Both share an audacious desire: "I want to die for you."

It is their proud and selfish form of happiness, a self-imposed destiny.

"Well, if that's the case, I have my own thoughts. Let's make an equal exchange. If you share everything you think about Magsarion, I'll share my impressions of Kaikhosru,"

"Are you interested in Magsarion?"

"Of course, it would be surprising if he didn't pique anyone's interest. I always knew he was otherworldly, but..." Alma trails off, struggling to find the right words.

Roxanne lets out a dry laugh, indicating her own uncertainty about how to react. The deeds attributed to Magsarion— overpowering Bahlavan, gutting Khvarenah, and slaying Frederica— defying formidable opponents alone, all within a single day— such accomplishments can only be described as extraordinary.

Rumor has it that he even vanquished Mashyana, elevating his achievements above Varhran's.

"And yet, for some reason, you, Armochka, didn't seem overly surprised. Honestly, it impressed me. I wondered, 'What did she see in him to believe in him so fervently?'"

"Don't exaggerate. I was just... lost," Alma admits.

"Although, in hindsight, it did seem logical to me. So, did I guess correctly? Then why do you think Magsarion is so calm now? I expected him to unleash his wrath and lay waste to everything in his path."

"No need to make assumptions, my foxy friend."

She had been pondering it herself even before Roxanne brought it up. Indeed, Magsarion seemed poised to unleash his fury, especially considering his innate lack of affability. With the power to vanquish several Demon Kings consecutively, it would have been natural for him to continue his rampage. Yet, for the past three months, he had remained idle. Why?

"Perhaps he is studying us, trying to understand us completely before he strikes. So we won't be able to escape."

"Really? One would least expect such insight from him."

"Indeed, Magsarion doesn't care for dealing with others. You're right about that. Moreover, I believe that until recently, he didn't even contemplate understanding others,"

Roxanne agrees with a quiet nod, indicating her concurrence. The transformation in Magsarion— his awakening— likely occurred between Verethragna and the alliance meeting when he and Quinn battled Mashyana in the Sky Burial Sphere.

"Quinn might know something. She's been immersing herself in the library lately, avoiding social interactions," Alma suggests.

"She must be seeking answers for herself. Besides, why would she willingly engage with you?"

Alma dismisses Roxanne's complaint and presses on. She is genuinely intrigued by Quinn's current preoccupations, but for now, the focus remains on Magsarion.

"In any case, I strongly sense that he's attempting to understand his surroundings. The recent events are shrouded in mystery, and my thoughts are consumed by them whenever I have a free moment. I can't fathom how both you and I can sit here and discuss our friends."

Roxanne lets out a dry chuckle.

"Ahaha, well, when you think about it, the world has become quite amusing, hasn't it? Of course, I don't mind Magsarion killing me, but for now, I'd prefer to live a little longer. Or for you to kill me. Although, now that I think about it, he's been like this for a long time."

Alma inhales deeply and shakes her head slowly. Yes, there have been noticeable changes in Magsarion over the past three months, but it's not as if the foundation for those changes didn't exist before. He had always fixated on a particular person, and his desire was so intense that the rest of the world seemed secondary or tertiary to him.

"Magsarion only saw a hero, Sir Varhran, nothing else. Maybe it wasn't out of admiration, but due to a far more sinister reason. He was determined to understand his elder brother, who died misunderstood, and the growing remorse for not finding a resolution drove him to wield his sword in such a manner...

Alma struggles to recall that image. Even if Magsarion had awakened from his prolonged delusions, leading him to his current state, the answer couldn't have simply materialized out of thin air. To finally end his conflict with a brother he couldn't comprehend, he must have sworn back then never to become a hero.

After all, when she reflects on his face...

As Alma reaches this point, her widened eyes reveal astonishment.

It can't be...

"Is there something wrong?"

"Oh, forgive me," Alma utters, her voice tinged with confusion and apology.

She hastily dismisses the unsettling thoughts that had momentarily clouded her mind, attributing them to fatigue. She reassures herself that everything is fine, refusing to entertain any other possibility.

"In the grand scheme of things, I suppose I won't be able to divulge much more about him." "Are you disappointed?"

Roxanne questions, her tone carrying a hint of curiosity. Alma, despite her initial expectation, finds herself intrigued by the conversation. She shakes her head, indicating her satisfaction with the exchange.

"No, it has been quite fascinating indeed. Alright, now it's your turn..."

As per their agreement, it is now Roxanne's turn to fulfill her end of the bargain. Alma prepares to ask her for the promised insights, but to her dismay, Roxanne seems to have other plans.

"Oh, my apologies. It seems our time is up," Roxanne announces calmly, rising from the table. Alma is taken aback, about to voice her frustration at the sudden interruption, but before she can utter a word, Roxanne continues.

"You may request him to continue. Here you go."

With a nonchalant gesture, Roxanne presents Alma with a letter. Alma snatches it from her hand, realizing instantly what it is.

"An invitation from Kaikhosru. I will handle your affairs in the meantime. So go, take some time to relax," Roxanne informs her, her words sending a chill down Alma's spine.

Alma examines the letter, noting the unmistakable seal of the dragon. She can feel the weight of its authenticity. But it is Roxanne's next words that truly unsettle her, stirring a mix of anticipation and apprehension.

"He requests your presence, along with Magsarion."

It was getting dark when I was woken up by a shy voice.

"Quinn-san, Quinn-san, it's almost time."

I was lying on my back buried in the book, and slowly raised my upper body. When I looked, the librarian was standing by my side with a slightly embarrassed smile on her face.

"It's fine to work hard, but it's not good to be too hard on yourself. If you don't face the book with a quiet mind, it will act spitefully. It hides important things and causes misunderstandings."

"...I see, that might be true."

I was embarrassed to hear such an extremely honest sermon softly. It is true that there is no point in studying with a smokey head, and there is absolutely no answer. Even though I'm pretty unreasonable compared to humans, my recent behavior must have gone too far.

However, it was necessary to do so.

"There is still a little more time until closing, but are you ready to go home today?"

"Yes. I have something to do after this, so I asked you to call me early. I'm sorry for always making a mess, but I'll see you tomorrow."

"Yes, we are waiting for you."

After politely exchanging bows with the female librarian, I left the special room set up in the capital's largest library. Normally, it's a high-ranking place with a sour look on the face of a casualty, but it goes without saying why I was treated like a distinguished guest.

After the last battle, I was completely treated like a hero. Most of the facilities are free passes, and if you walk outside, various people will gather with big smiles. It was objectively a natural hospitality if it was a mention that he was a person who had rendered distinguished service in the campaign that defeated the four pillars of the Seven Great Demon Kings.

The reality is that I was just going back and forth and was of no use.

Until now, I think I would have refused all hospitality because I could not accept that gap. However, I had resolved to make far-sighted use of these circumstances, utilizing everything



within my reach. It was crucial to settle personal matters promptly and remain focused on the future. Hence, I immersed myself in my research, which had already begun to bear fruit. Even though much of my knowledge was acquired on the fly, I believed it would prove valuable. I needed to gather myself, not letting others influence me— especially the one I was scheduled to meet today.

"Oh, it's Quinn! Wait, wait, come here!" a loud voice suddenly called out, disrupting my attempt to maintain a low profile.

The surrounding crowd immediately stirred, and I involuntarily glanced upward, hoping to escape an encounter with someone rather awkward. How should I handle this?

"Is that... you, Ashozushta? What brings you here all of a sudden?" I inquired, recognizing my comrade-in-arms leading a group of enthusiastic boys and girls.

"It's not that I have any business with you, sir. I just noticed you seemed down, so I called out. Are you eating properly?"

Ashozushta's words came forth with a mix of formality and concern.

"Well, more or less. By the way, who are these children with you?" I inquired, observing the group.

"They're my siblings. Today, I planned to teach them an invincible super move..." Ashozushta explained before abruptly pausing.

"Ah, yes, I understand. You don't need to spill everything. Thank you for your understanding."

Like me, Ashozushta had become a true hero. Since our fierce battle against the Locusts of Ferocity, fame clung to her, and given her temperament, she had no qualms about embracing it. After she sustained serious injuries, I had worried about her for a while. However, it was evident from her current state of well-being that she had made a full recovery.

"Maybe you'd like to join us? Have a little fun with the kids, don't be shy... Ah, no, that's enough! Stop petting me, don't tug, sir! You'll make me go bald, attracting all this attention!"

Undoubtedly, the townspeople also adored Ashozushta. Despite complaints about her mannerisms and pompous demeanor, they couldn't help but be drawn to her, likely due to her inherent goodness.

After shooing away the curious crowd, Ashozushta pointed towards the children who had gathered behind her, their eyes sparkling with anticipation, and turned her attention back to me.

"Perhaps you can't tell from their appearances, but these kids have promising futures, sir. To be honest, if you were to train them, they would undoubtedly grow into formidable individuals."

"I have no doubt about that. Our ranks have been expanding since then."

With the defeat of the Demon Kings, the **Yazata** ranks had swelled dramatically. A similar phenomenon had occurred during Varhran's time, and these children, too, were like golden eggs with limitless potential. When it came to combat matters, Ashozushta maintained unwavering discipline, and her approval of them spoke volumes.

"Seems like your enthusiasm is waning, sir. I'm trying to establish a sacred realm here, ensuring peace for Incest and Samluk in the next generation, sir. You're not doing too bad yourself."

"Of course, I feel the same way. However, Fer seems rather down, and Magsarion... it's hard to gauge his mood. I'm not particularly fond of this atmosphere either. Though I understand your concerns.

Indeed, we shared a sense of unease regarding the present circumstances. The influx of **Yazatas** brought a certain level of delight, yet we couldn't help but question whether they could truly be considered allies. The blame lay with the alliance involving the Dragon Husk Star— an unprecedented event that entailed the merging of two planets.

Furthermore, the treaty signing ceremony was merely five days away, yet it seemed to elicit little concern from anyone besides us. The Avesta's sentiment remained unwavering, except when it came to Kaikhosru's clique. One could understand the populace's attitude towards His Majesty. Thanks to his well-deserved trust and the recent victory, a surge in morale overshadowed any anxieties, and his decisions remained unaffected. Ultimately, we behaved in a similar manner, not opposing his will unless we had a substantial reason to do so.

However, there was a clear distinction between accepting the status quo and genuinely embracing it. Frankly, I couldn't shake the feeling that I had been transported to an enchanting otherworldly realm.

"I would have liked to speak with Alma as well, but she's probably preoccupied at the moment. So, we won't be able to meet right now."

"She never spares herself. Personally, I find it easier to act than worry about trivialities. Keep up the good work. Your unwavering behavior alone inspires confidence," I assured her, voicing my genuine thoughts.

Ashozushta scratched her cheek bashfully, accepting my words.

"So, you won't join us for the lessons, sir?"

"Unfortunately, I have an appointment," I replied, pausing momentarily to gather my resolve.

"An appointment with His Majesty Sirius."



For the past three months, I had been patiently awaiting approval for an audience with His Majesty Sirius. However, I refused to let the time go to waste, so I immersed myself in the library. There was so much I needed to learn before meeting the esteemed ruler.

My primary focus was on the Divine Sword—a powerful weapon wielded by Varhran that brought about the downfall of evil. Unfortunately, ever since Khvarenah nearly destroyed the Sacred Realm two decades ago, the topic of the Divine Sword had been shrouded in secrecy. It was difficult to say whether Magsarion had any knowledge of it, and even Alma, known for her sincerity, remained tight-lipped.

This only fueled my curiosity, as it seemed the Divine Sword held a significant mystery within its history. As I delved deeper into my research, I realized that no amount of studying would provide a complete picture. The information was intentionally hidden, leading to contradictions and

discrepancies in the records. But I was determined to uncover the truth, piecing together fragments to reveal the obscured history. It was a challenging task, but I had faith in my ability to succeed.

By reading between the lines and understanding the authors' intentions, I searched for subtle hints and questions that would lead me closer to the truth. According to the chronicles, Varhran achieved his first great feat at the age of fifteen. Over the following twelve years, until his untimely death at twenty-seven, he defeated thirty-six first-rank

**Daevas**, five special-rank **Daevas**, and three Demon Kings. These accomplishments were already astounding, but I suspected that the numbers were underestimated.

If the Divine Sword truly possessed divine influence, then there should have been even more victories, yet they were absent from the records. The descriptions of the Yazatas of that time and the overall situation in the Sacred Realm seemed vague, failing to capture the rapid growth and the fervor that fueled their triumphs. The conflicting desires to preserve Varhran's greatness and conceal the glory of the Divine Sword had distorted history. I couldn't help but wonder if His Majesty had his own motives entwined within this discord.

Did the old me, the person I used to be, repulse him?

And if so, why?

It became apparent that the distortions in the records began twenty-eight years ago with the victory over Montserrat. Varhran himself was present during that event, which meant something significant must have occurred at that time. It marked the beginning of a path characterized by heartlessness and ruthlessness, casting a shadow over His Majesty's reign.

With a determination to unravel this mystery, I made my way to the royal castle. However, upon arrival, I was met with an unexpected reception. Even the valet at the threshold appeared perplexed, trying to decipher His Majesty Sirius' intentions. It seemed that they had decided to welcome me in an unusually warm manner. Instead of being directed to the usual audience hall, I was led to a wing of the castle that was typically accessible only to the king himself— almost as if I were being treated as a member of the family.

It was a privilege usually granted to the likes of Varhran or Lady Nahid, and perhaps Roxanne, but I never expected such access. While on my way to the designated chamber, I couldn't help but recall a past memory of Sirius having a certain favorite, though I never discovered who she was. I

wondered if she had any connection to the Divine Sword and myself. Lost in these thoughts, I stepped out onto the roof where His Majesty awaited me.

He stood with his back turned, gazing out at the breathtaking landscape below— an idyllic holy realm. However, as I approached, I heard his words, spoken with a tone of disgust.

"It's repulsive, isn't it?"

His remark caught me off guard, and my eyes widened in astonishment. For a brief moment, I thought he had read my thoughts, but I quickly realized that it was his personal opinion, a sentiment shared by King Sirius himself.

"Soon, things will worsen," he continued, his voice tinged with a sense of resignation.

"With someone as insignificant as me at the helm, only decline awaits my subjects. And eventually, they will yearn for the illusory 'good.' That's what I desire, and thus, it is what awaits my subjects. The time for the universal hero's return is drawing near."

Baffled by his cryptic words, I attempted to inquire further, but my question was abruptly cut off, left hanging in the air. His Majesty remained silent, continuing to speak incessantly, almost as if lost in his own thoughts.

"The goodness I advocate for is outdated," he declared.

"There is no victory, no salvation, only emptiness. So let us become the very evil that devours evil. May the universe be engulfed in the supremacy of heartlessness. Only by planting the rotten abyss of the fallen can we give birth to the madness of the 'righteous'— a radiant purity. And then, I shall disappear without a trace, for in the end, I am nothing more than a shadow of Varhran."

I don't understand what the king is saying. No, I just didn't want to understand.

This person realized that he had not fully acknowledged his own worth. Sirius hates himself to the extent that words such as self-punishment and self-ridicule cannot be expressed.

“Just a few more steps away and I can throw away my shameful feelings. There's a serious shortage of actors when you think like this, but imitations have a way of imitations. My duty as a thug who is crushed by the real thing. Hey friend, it's a feat you can't do. A true scum must be like me. I am the personification of evil, all pollution. A prayer that eventually becomes a stepping stone for the "righteous" hero, and disappears while carrying all the uncleanness by being killed...”

Even if I felt it up close and directly, it was suddenly hard to believe.

How tragic, how painful, and what a ridiculous champion, I can't control my feelings welling up...

"I was ridiculed by Kaikhosru. What I couldn't give up on was..."

"Shut up!"

A short shout interrupted his monologue. I'm sure from now on, I'll cross a line that shouldn't be crossed. Even though I was aware of that, I couldn't stop and I have no intention of stopping.

Someone's heart aching in the chest overflows from the mouth.

"Didn't you swear she would never shed tears again?" I burst out, unable to restrain myself any longer.

As I uttered those words, the atmosphere around His Majesty underwent a sudden shift. Slowly, with an eerie creak, he turned to face me, yet his expression remained devoid of any emotion.

"You look like a terrible crybaby. You don't want to be told that crying is beautiful, so why are you trying to get dirty like that? Why don't you try to stop your tears?"

In the beginning, he should have aimed purely for that path.

"Please don't give up on yourself, saying that you're not a vessel or that you're lacking. There are people who have had high expectations of you in the past, and even now, so betraying them is the royal road, isn't it? I can't forgive you!"

My roaring cry was overlaid with a horrifyingly tender whisper.

"So, you've finally arrived,"

Sirius, who turned towards me, was completely expressionless. Despite this, for some reason, a terrifying rage rushed over me, more than any roaring wailing. A broken concept that is gloomy yet intense, sinking yet boiling. Evil that eats evil.

"It's often disguised. It was worth the wait. This is the day when you remember yourself and play around with 'me'."

He draws his sword and sings as he approaches, step by step.

"I won't call it revenge; I never had the right to such an act. But, Quinn, mark my words— you shall witness the day when the curse that toyed with you meets its end." Simultaneously, the sky became adorned with silver wings, and in that moment, a revelation struck me. Vohu Mana had already fused with him, becoming one. No longer could the figure before me be simply labeled as the holy king; it was an entity incompatible with me, deceiving my countrymen, painting them in false colors, and now intent on annihilating me— one of the few remaining foreign elements.

"The day of the curse's demise draws near, my beloved," he proclaimed, his voice resolute.

And so, I prepared myself for the inevitable confrontation, knowing that the battle lay just ahead.

### 3

He became aware of the change as he practiced his swings amidst the vast forest, far removed from the bustling capital.

“What is this?”

An air of curiosity mingled with apprehension enveloped him, prompting him to halt his movements. The presence of forest creatures, once palpable and vibrant, seemed to fade into oblivion, leaving behind a suffocating stillness. The world, as if submerged in an invisible ocean's depths, weighed heavily upon him, and he instantly grasped the nature of this imposing pressure. It took only a simple act of looking upward to reveal the truth. Yet, for ordinary denizens, this phenomenon went unnoticed, taken for granted like breathing or a heartbeat. They remained oblivious to any hint of unease stemming from it. He, however, stood as the exception— an

anomaly sensing the immense power and peril intertwined within. Aware that the once-protective expanse of white wings no longer shielded him, his reaction was only natural.

"Little Fer!"

Moreover, it was only natural that his fellow outsiders also recognized the impending danger. Startled by a loud and somewhat displeasing call of his nickname, Ferdows clicked his tongue in annoyance and turned towards the source. His eyes caught sight of a nimble girl swiftly making her way towards him, gracefully maneuvering through the forest's thick foliage.

"Exactly! Did you see?! Surely, you see! This is a grave matter, sir, little Fer!"

"Yes, I understand. Just calm down a bit. And don't call me 'little.'"

Stepping back from Ashozushta, who appeared on the verge of seizing him mid-flight, Ferdows furrowed his brows in frustration.

"I know you're much older than you appear, but I've already told you not to treat me like a child. It's embarrassing."

"Don't let minor irritations bother you, sir. And in all honesty, you truly are a 'little Fer.' While you bask in your pretended coolness, which pains others to witness, you remain a mere child, sir."

"Would you be silent, or did you come here looking for a fight?"

While he responded with a displeased expression, a chill coursed down his spine, intensifying his discomfort. Ashozushta seemed to share the same unease. Though as a newly transformed Star Spirit, she was more prone to expressing herself, she keenly sensed the gravity of the situation in her own way. Now, their mutual understanding conveyed a singular message - Vohu Mana had readied itself for battle.

But who was their adversary?

It didn't seem likely that a **Daeva** had infiltrated the capital. Despite the difficulty in believing, Ferdows whispered, almost certain of his statement.

"What is it, Quinn?"

"I believe it must be her. She even mentioned meeting with Sirius, sir."



Upon hearing this, Ferdows couldn't help but groan involuntarily. What was she thinking? It was evident that the king was no longer the familiar figure they once knew; there was no need for confirmation. Deliberate provocations would lead to naught but disaster— it was nothing short of a reckless plunge into the abyss.

In his heart, he cursed her as a fool, but with each passing moment, self-loathing intensified. After all, he was the one in the wrong. He had anticipated this day would come eventually. They needed to challenge Sirius' intentions, which meant Quinn had made the right judgment— to strike preemptively rather than merely absorbing blows. It was a bold decision, to say the least, and a far more honorable way of life than hiding behind wisdom while accomplishing nothing.

For they existed precisely for the sake of battle. In any situation, one must press forward; flight or indecision would not be forgiven.

"Whatever the case, we must act swiftly. We cannot let this matter be."

"Yes. However, if we are to face His Majesty, we shall refrain from using the gifts of Vohu Mana."

Addressing the primary obstacle directly, Ferdows continued without hesitation. "All hope lies in you, Ashozushta. I apologize, but please let me use your gifts."

"Of course, sir!"

Returning a smile to the delighted and puffed-up girl, Ferdows resolved himself. He would not allow any more of his comrades to perish. He would endure any suffering and perform any necessary dirty work. If need be, he would even strike down the holy king.

Feeling the intense pain once more as Ashozushta's gift enveloped him, the young man vowed to remain an unwavering blade until the bitter end.



After a momentary weightlessness, I find myself standing on a vast expanse of silver, realizing that this place is not quite Earth. I am perched on the back of Vohu Mana, the Star Spirit itself.

"How long has it been?"

I ask Sirius, who stands before me, trying to maintain composure. I need to uncover the truth behind his deception, how he manipulated us **Yazatas** into believing that Vohu Mana was in hibernation, while he actually seized control of the Star Spirit's throne. I cannot face my fallen comrades without knowing the extent of his betrayal.

"I rightfully claimed it thirteen years ago. However, I conducted a test soon after our defeat by Khvarenah," he responds, his gaze fixed on me.

"Why would you do such a thing?!" I exclaim, bewildered by his unexpected answer.

His cold smile deepens as he continues, "I wanted to ensure the well-being of my wife."

His unexpected revelation leaves me speechless. Sirius elaborates, his voice laced with a chilling tone, "At that time, Vohu Mana was on the brink of exhaustion. The defeat left us all in a state of disrepair, so it is not entirely his fault. When the Star Spirit arrived on this planet, he fell into a coma-like slumber, and as his representative, I had limited means to inquire about the outside world."

"Did this dissatisfaction lead you to view his weakness as an opportunity?" I inquire, trying to piece together the puzzle.

"Indeed," he nods, disappointment etched on his face.

"It required little effort initially, and I had no other motives at first. But things changed soon enough. Three years after my test, I learned of my wife's demise. While the news was unfortunate, it allowed me to achieve my original goal. Even though I had the choice to step back, I chose to continue my usurpation. Can you guess why? If I had stopped then, I would not have resorted to devouring Vohu Mana. Encroaching upon a half-dead Star Spirit would only shorten the life of the planet significantly. Yet, it was my final chance to become the ideal **Ashavan** king."

Seizing a weakened Star Spirit who had no future. Depriving Vohu Mana of the power necessary for his rejuvenation would render the planet lifeless, akin to suicide. It is no wonder that none of the **Yazatas** never realized the true state of affairs in the Sacred Realm. Yet, Sirius, driven to recklessness, was willing to sacrifice the planet's remaining life, resembling a flickering candle.

Perhaps his alliance with Kaikhosru is an attempt to consume other stars and prolong his own existence. However, this deviates greatly from the **Ashavan** way of thinking. Why did he choose such a hellish path? I venture to explore the possibilities.

"Is it revenge? Did you desire strength for that purpose?"

He shakes his head in disappointment and locks his gaze with mine. A mysterious glimmer flickers somewhere deep within his eyes, as if reaching the edge of the world.

"When I absorbed Vohu Mana's power, I caught glimpses of his memories. It turns out that chaos engulfed our world during the birth of the Star Spirit. You may understand this to some extent, but do you recall?"

Regrettably, I admit, "I'm afraid not. What do you mean by chaos?"

"Chaos in the truest sense. A turmoil where good and evil were interpreted in countless ways, making it impossible to discern right from wrong... No, it would be more accurate to say that it was a time to define these concepts. Vohu Mana, being the most virtuous survivor of that era, shaped the very concept of goodness based on his value system alone."

"So, you're saying that our unity was born out of chance, and there was no inherent harmony among us?" I ask, trying to comprehend his perspective.

"Exactly. The remnants of ancient Star Spirits, preaching their own brand of justice, serve as proof. Those who survived the chaos of that time, after many years, failed to distinguish between enemies and allies, for they all emerged from a past where they fought for dominance. I can only surmise the course of events. More than two thousand years ago, there was a monumental upheaval, larger than Varhran's demise, that upended everything and left 'everyone' disoriented. As a result, all the noble minds were depleted, leaving behind only narrow-minded fools. We have inherited the sins of our ancestors, tainted by a thoughtless puppet show. However..."

Sirius gazes up at the sky, defiance in his voice as he proclaims,

"...That is why there must be a path that leads to the peak of folly. Even if this world does not tolerate brilliant minds and the common fool is powerless to change it, a great fool can shatter this deranged universe. I embraced this path to see my failed reign through to the end. And for the same reason, I will strike you down."

He turns his attention back to me and points his sword in my direction. According to him, he aspired to become a great fool. This is his purpose in all of this. His mindset teeters on the brink of madness, making it incomprehensible to an outsider. The betrayal of his people, culminating in the unforgivable act of usurpation, and his self-perception as a lowly being, all serve as pillars of his so-called righteousness. Even his wounded heart, still mourning his deceased wife and burning with anger towards me...

Frankly, it all seems utterly nonsensical. There appears to be a profound malfunction within his very being, and I find it difficult to even look at him. Yet, in some twisted way, there is a hint of agreement within me. Perhaps, this is the nature of humanity? After all, humans are not purely logical creatures with everything neatly organized. Within each of us, a complex palette of thoughts and emotions resides.

Maybe the blind malice consuming malice can be deemed correct in its own way. And maybe the unwavering goodness I have unwaveringly followed all this time is not as faultless as it seems. Following established principles can be thoughtless.

If for more than two thousand years in the Sacred Realm, the **Ashavans** merely adhered to Vohu Mana's temperament, likening it to a puppet show is an apt analogy. Nevertheless, despite these doubts, I am resolute and unyielding. Not out of blind obedience to orders from above, but out of my personal duty to oppose him. By striking at the core of his vulnerability, I have achieved more than just succumbing to the tense atmosphere. I had to say it; it was expected of me.

What stimulated Sirius's most important part was never just the momentum of the place. I needed to say it and was asked for it. because--

"I finally realize. Your wife was Quinn."

She is the woman who carried Frederica within her womb, deeply intertwined with his Majesty's regrets. The woman who pleaded to be killed, but was spared by Sirius, eventually becoming his wife.

What did my past-self do to Quinn, who departed with tearful eyes full of love?

I cannot recall the specifics at this moment, no matter how much I rack my brain, but I can vaguely surmise. In the end, I resonate with her in a way that no one else does. Her plea has not faded away; it continues to echo within me earnestly. It was her wish that brought me here, to fulfill Quinn's dream. We stand here because Sirius has been waiting for my response.

"She wished to meet you in a much better place. However, I cannot comply with this order."

"Ah, yes. She was such a woman. I do not deserve a wife like her, but I have never forgotten to be grateful," Sirius replies.

Suddenly, his sword trembles with an enigmatic quiver. A white flame emerges from the blade, burning faintly like a barely flickering candle, gradually intensifying...

"When you appeared in the Sacred Realm, claiming to be her, I felt a sense of fate. Let me thank you once again, my wife. I am still capable of being a despicable husband who tramples upon your memory for the sake of my selfish convictions."

In an instant, the white flame soars from the blade, carrying both his hatred and remorse.

"All that remains is meaningless. That is why trash must be as such."

A rapid succession of sword strikes forces me to take a large step backward. It was a premonition of danger that propelled me too far away. This white flame is exceedingly perilous. Instinctively, I know that it must never be touched. It possesses an essence that defies the laws of the universe, akin to the black distortion Magsarion unveiled in the Sky Burial Sphere. Although white is considered our color, it fails to convey that impression.

"I've been telling you, it all boils down to different interpretations," his Majesty says, moving towards me with fluid grace.

In a lightning-fast lunge, he strikes. I barely manage to evade, but the white flames enveloping his sword graze my hair lightly. And the outcome is astounding.

"Gah! It's..."

"The purity and righteousness associated with the color white are merely subjective viewpoints. If you shift your perspective, it becomes a blurred, feeble, 'insignificant' color of madness."

My hair was crumbling and falling apart. In order to escape the rotting invasion that was approaching at a terrifying speed, I pulled out the roots and got away with it, but if it had been one step too late, it would have been over.

White is worthless flame of decay. If this is Sirius's embodiment, it seems impossible to confront it with existing methods.

"What's wrong? Did you really end up in a dead end so soon? I can scarcely believe that this is the once invincible Divine Sword before me."

"No, that's not it," I correct him while deftly evading his relentless onslaught.

If this flame truly held superiority over the entire universe, it would have already reduced everything to ashes. Even if we assume its influence is limited to the Sacred Realm, it cannot be deemed perfect as long as there is an alien entity challenging it head-on. If Sirius intends to achieve his goal by trampling upon his feelings for Quinn, then conversely, he possesses a vulnerability that can be exploited. Even if the flames have consumed him, I refuse to surrender in the absence of alternatives.

"Do you believe that I am solely responsible for all the troubles?" I inquire, seeking clarity.

"Of course. You, and no one else, embody this world. You are the representative of a deranged mother, and there is no longer any need to spare your life," his biting words strike deep, and I find myself unable to refute them.

I had already gleaned a glimmer of this truth from my fragmented memories, and to deny his accusations simply because I have been fortunate enough to forget the exact nature of my transgressions would be an act of arrogance. Yet, beyond the accusations, my question holds strategic significance. I merely wished to ascertain if communication was still possible, if my words could reach him. In essence, I was testing the sound, attempting to discern its resonance.

Thus, I realized that this flame only burns physical objects. It does not decompose light or air, as evidenced by its continued visibility. So, the solution lies in finding a way to strike without making physical contact. Shockwaves or vacuum waves would be the most effective. With this realization, I take a step forward, summoning my strength...

"Ha-ah-ah!"

...and unleash a straight punch. Sirius's face freezes in astonishment.

Surely, in his wisdom, he must be aware of the nature and extent of his power. Therefore, my reasoning should not have perplexed him, and he must have devised a countermeasure. Hence, I deliberately attacked in the most familiar manner, reminiscent of the "great fool" Magsarion. I cast aside caution recklessly, just as he would have. The fist howls, disregarding the white flames. Abandoning any thought of retreat, its impact is somewhat weakened by the force of decay, but not nullified. And so, the veil of flame weakens, allowing my fist to break through and strike him squarely on the temple. His stately figure staggers backward.

Ignoring the lamentable state of my decaying right hand, I whisper, "...As expected, you are pushing yourself too hard."

Even if his strength were unparalleled, this blade and armor could hardly be deemed invincible. There are those in this world who are willing to sacrifice their very lives for a single blow, even when others might consider it imprudent. Those who cannot fathom this, and are genuinely taken aback by such acts, are far removed from the realm of the great fool.

"If Magsarion stood in my place, you would not have emerged unscathed. Therefore, I implore you, awaken, Your Majesty. Regardless of the fate that awaits the world, your dignity cannot be considered insignificant."

"Did you not listen to me?" Sirius retorts, and in reply, a surge of white flame erupts more fiercely than ever.

"I told you that I am aware of my own shortcomings. I am the one who will take hold of the heavens and guide people toward the true light, despite being a man like me. To the birth of a legend like Varhran..."

"That is not true!" I interject suddenly, realizing that I cannot yield now.

Though my knowledge is limited to fragments and impressions, there are certain aspects I cannot fathom. My question is strikingly simple.

Why does he hold Varhran in such high regard?

Perhaps Varhran was the mightiest being in history. Perhaps he possessed an unparalleled perspective that resonated deeply with others, instilling a sense of epic grandeur by his mere presence. He embodied the ideal, the dream. Many were truly captivated by his radiance, believing in the concept of "victory."

...But was that truly right?

Maybe my blind admiration for him had faltered recently, as I gained fleeting glimpses into various memories. He began to assume a different guise. Like an unknown, even monstrous entity. And even Sirius's wife found this "everyone's" hero repugnant and terrifying.

"Did meeting him bring you happiness?"

"..."

Sirius falls silent, unable to provide an answer. Yet, I vehemently shake my head.

"Wasn't he at one with the previous me? Then why do you hate me, but not Varhran?"

"Shut up..."



Sirius retorts with a creaking voice, but I vigorously shake my head. If we truly followed separate paths and upheld distinct ideals, then it stands to reason that our true adversaries may also differ. Magsarion had chosen the role of the "everyone's hero." Even though I remain oblivious to his strategy, the path he treads, and the outcome that awaits, his battle did not commence yesterday or today.

In that case, who is my true opponent?...

The answer becomes evident.

"I will defeat the Divine Sword. For I believe that is the only way to be true to myself. You too must not shy away from this answer, Your Majesty. Examine your surroundings closely— for Quinn's sake as well. Who is the true adversary you must confront?"

With that, I close my eyes and fall silent for a moment. When I open my eyes once more, I release all that has been stirring in my heart.

"You are plagued by the curse of Varhran. Until you acknowledge it, until you dispel that curse, you shall remain insignificant!"

I know full well that I struck him in his most vulnerable spot with all my might. It is inevitable that his response will be severe, and I am prepared to face it. Since I declared my intent to defeat the Divine Sword, I have no intention of hiding from the sins of my past life.

At the very least, if I cannot aid Sirius in dispelling his anger and grief, I do not deserve the right to share the same stage as his callousness and ruthlessness. As I admit this, I rise once more, assuming a stance of readiness. Yet, what unfolds next surpasses all of my expectations.

"Quinn!"

A familiar voice resounds from above. Startled, I glance upward and behold Ashozushta and Fer swiftly approaching. Perhaps they sensed my peril and rushed to my aid? Their courage, though commendable, resembles that of moths drawn to a flame.

"Vassals? What a nuisance you are..." Sirius mutters.

"No, please!" I implore, knowing that they will not be able to evade Sirius 's anomaly on their first attempt.

Standing resolutely in the path of the blade, I witness the white flame gradually piercing my chest...

Just as I sense impending death, a peculiar sensation wash over me.

It feels as if the entire world has closed in around me.

#### 4

The scene transformed dramatically, like a shifting haze, leaving me to observe helplessly. Amidst the engulfing darkness, which seemed utterly bleak, two men sat across from each other engaged in conversation. Their faces were familiar to me.

"Give me Nahid. How much longer will you deal with this?"

Kaikhosru asked Sirius with an arrogant grin. There was no one else present besides the two of them. Though I struggled to comprehend the unfolding situation, it was clear that this exchange did not occur in the present. However, it didn't seem to have taken place years ago either; it was more likely within the past three months.

It appeared to be a form of telepathy between Star Spirits, with their immense power manifesting as a tangible image for me to perceive. In reality, it was nothing more than a glimpse into their minds. I couldn't fathom how I had arrived here, but for now, my only option was to observe. Given my future plans, it was crucial for me to understand the contents of the discussion between these two renegade kings. In response to Kaikhosru's demand, Sirius, in a grave and commanding voice, replied with a question of his own.

"Are you saying that Alma is inadequate?"

"No, quite the contrary. I'm even pleasantly surprised by her. But precisely because of that, it doesn't concern me. There is no balance," Kaikhosru retorted with a hint of frustration.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you understand, Sirius? I offered you my precious Dragon Jewel Princess, but what value does Alma hold for you? She is merely a pawn, whereas our losses are not equal."

"So, Nahid will make up for it?"

"Yes, something like that. By merely exploiting Alma, you insult both her and the Dragon Jewel Princess who took her place. And naturally, you insult me as well, a man who loves them both. If you're willing to initiate a war, that's a different story, but if not, you better match my sacrifice."

Objectively speaking, Kaikhosru's argument made sense. Sirius indeed felt no particular attachment to Alma, and her sacrifice paled in comparison to Kaikhosru's first concubine. It was understandable that Kaikhosru couldn't forgive such a discrepancy, given how much he cherished her. However, it seemed outrageous to me that he would demand Nahid. Not only was she Sirius's younger sister, but she also held a vital role as a precious trump card in the Sacred Realm. Even though we stood on the precipice of a war between good and evil, with Kaikhosru still a potential adversary, it would be natural to decline his request. Hence, I assumed they would reach a compromise, perhaps involving a land plot or something similar. However, the outcome proved far more unexpected.

"Very well. If you want her that much, take her," Sirius calmly responded, though the decision wasn't made in haste. Continuing, he added something peculiar.

"But don't let your guard down with her. You haven't dealt with that yet."

His voice trembled with a touch of fear, reverberating in the surrounding darkness. Kaikhosru merely chuckled in response.

"I understand all too well, without your warnings, how terrifying women can be. And if you're referring to Nahid herself, I know her even better than you do, Sirius."

"What do you mean?"

"Isn't it obvious? It's not difficult to understand. Since Dragon Jewel Princess started serving you, I've gained much insight into your inner workings. I was aware of Frederica, for instance. Is that not evidence enough?"

It appeared that he was insinuating that Roxanne had been involved in espionage, and while the phrasing was vague enough to conceal its true meaning, Sirius did not elaborate. Instead, he continued discussing the procedure for transferring his younger sister in a businesslike tone.

"After the treaty signing ceremony, I will hand over the seal-removing device to you. From then on, you are free to do as you please, but I won't be held responsible for what she may say."

"That won't be a problem. If you wish it, Nahid will obey me. She is that kind of woman."

Kaikhosru's apparent mockery elicited a slightly gloomier expression from Sirius. The nature of their agreement remained a mystery, with the answer deferred until the treaty signing ceremony. Hence, I had to attend. Whether to prevent it or witness it through to the end, I was determined to participate while this colossal wave was still approaching. The only disgrace I couldn't bear was being swept away, rendered powerless and incapable of action.

Open your eyes, rise to your feet. Return to the real world; it is not yet time to perish. Amidst the ensuing chaos, which only intensified matters... remember that you pledged to seek answers despite any doubts and to continue moving forward.

This insignia, emblematic of my existence, transforms me into a formidable and unwieldy weapon. In a world bereft of all else, it remains my sole guiding star, lifting me from my knees.



"Quinn, Quinn— get up!"

As if my inner turmoil had reached the outer realms, I found myself returning to consciousness. The familiar sensation of being abruptly awakened mixed with a subtle sense of alertness, tinged with a hint of trepidation. I couldn't help but imagine the sharp blows landing on my face and the weight of knees digging into my stomach, a routine ritual that had become oddly comforting.

"How much longer do you plan on sleeping?"

Reacting instinctively, I rolled sideways, deftly evading the follow-up attack. Ashozushta's exclamation transformed into a yelp of surprise as she fell victim to her own failed maneuver. But I couldn't afford to repeat my mistakes. The fact that I could discuss such matters with calmness indicated my continued existence. So, what transpired after that intense skirmish?

"It seems you're alright. That's a relief."

"Yes, somehow we all made it through."

I nodded at Fer, who stood beside me, offering a smile in return. His gaze briefly shifted to a specific part of my body, but it didn't raise any particular questions. My right palm had disintegrated entirely, leaving only a stump at the wrist. Even though I couldn't feel the physical pain, I doubted it would regenerate. Having defied Sirius's will, I had forfeited my access to the astral spirit's gifts, and healing the wounds inflicted by the white flame would not be an easy task.

However, I harbored no regrets. In fact, I considered myself fortunate, having escaped with such minor consequences. My resolve, clenched tightly in my fist, reassured me that as long as I drew breath, there was no room for disappointment. All that remained was to forge ahead.

"Now, where are we?"

"Good question. I wish I knew myself, but this scenery... it's rather unsettling. Something doesn't feel right."

"Indeed, indeed, indeed! This place is incredibly peculiar!"

Ashozushta somersaulted and sprung to her feet, interjecting herself into the conversation. With animated gestures, she pointed out the surroundings, speaking hurriedly.

"We can't leave, sir. We're trapped in this garden, clearly."

Almost in response to her complaint, weightless petals began to ascend into the air. It was evident to all of us what this place was, even if we couldn't pinpoint its exact location.

The blooming flowerbeds, the fleeting breeze's cool touch, the crystal-clear blue sky above... everything felt undeniably real, yet somehow tinged with an air of illusion. Perhaps, it was more accurate to say that we had stepped into a painting. Nonetheless, this ephemeral sensation gripped my heart, evoking a sense of familiarity.

Did I know this landscape?

And if so, when could I have seen it?

"No matter how far we go, there's no escape. While there doesn't seem to be any immediate danger, it's hard to discern what they want from us in this unchanging environment."

"So, we... Wait, hey - what's that?"

Fer's voice suddenly carried a sense of urgency, drawing my attention to his line of sight. As I followed his gaze, we all fixated on the same focal point.

"A castle? There was no such structure here, sir."

Ashozushta's observation was accurate. A colossal edifice materialized out of thin air, leaving us all taken aback. It wasn't merely the sudden appearance that puzzled me; it was the hauntingly familiar design. A white-stone castle towered over the surrounding flower garden... unmistakably, it was the one.

"This is... the Garden of Bloodshed."

Everything before me resembled the territory of the murderers, a place I had once encountered prior to embarking on my mission to Khvarenah. Though the scenery held some differences, the castle's structure mirrored that of Frederica's dwelling. Yet, it shouldn't exist anymore. I had been informed that it was destroyed during the battle between Magsarion and Bahlavan. So, what did our current predicament signify? My mind raced, searching for answers.

"That's it."

Suddenly, as if a missing puzzle piece had fallen into place, all the enigmas tormenting me became clear.

"I believe it's a severing ritual."

"A severing ritual? What does that entail?"

"A magical act where a part of the world is cut off and sealed in a parallel realm. During my investigations, I came to understand that the Garden of Bloodshed was created through such a ritual."

Though my own knowledge on the matter was limited, I shared what I could. The severing ritual was a privilege reserved for exceptional **Ashavans**, serving the purpose of imposing seals. As our powers waned against the **Daevas**, we devised a plan B, expelling them from our world. However, perfecting this process proved challenging, and thus the technique existed with its limitations.

The Garden of Bloodshed came into existence to seal the embodiment of evil, embodied by Frederica, and it was likely her mother who performed the severing ritual. This aligned with my

memories from before I was born, indicating that it was the domain of the previous Quinn. The castle, still untouched by the murderers, once inhabited by Sirius' wife.

In essence, it seemed plausible that Quinn had performed the severing ritual twice. One of the parallel worlds ceased to exist, becoming the Garden of Bloodshed, while the other remained, now spread out before us.

"I see. But why have we suddenly been transported here?"

"I presume she had predetermined these conditions. For the sake of reuniting with her husband."

I shared the details of my confrontation with Sirius. In a place like this, there was no need to withhold any information, and it felt wrong to harbor suspicions towards my companions.

"So, if we bring Sirius to the castle's door, it will open?"

"Yes. Unconsciously, I had been following her instructions all this time."

Please, help my husband. I long to meet him again in a place far more beautiful.

These were the heartfelt pleas of Quinn's. It seemed we owed our current circumstances to her desires. The condition was that I leave a mark on Sirius's soul. Perhaps the conversation I witnessed between Kaikhosru and Sirius was a result of that. Nonetheless, it paved the way.

Quinn still loved Sirius to this day. The key, no doubt, lay within the lock, rendering his wife's plea more than a mere act of insignificance.

"Let's proceed. If we've received an invitation, it's only right to respond."

"Agreed. But we mustn't linger for too long. I've heard tales of time passing uniquely within such closed dimensions."

Fer's remark carried wisdom. In this place, frozen in time for two decades, waiting for the clock to tick normally would prove perilous. We had to return before the treaty signing ceremony, and we couldn't afford to squander precious moments. Exchanging determined glances, we ventured toward the castle, enveloped in a haze of pollen.

Alma arrived in the capital just as Quinn was locked in a fierce battle with her library books. There was no one accompanying Alma; she returned to her homeland in splendid isolation. Given her current circumstances, one might not have expected her to be so carefree, but she never boasted about her origins anyway. The title thrust upon her without her consent only annoyed her, and she considered the overwhelming emotions she now felt as her own personal burden.

Yet, this matter had become so personal that it had left her feeling disoriented and unable to find her place amidst the jumble of nerves.

"Hello, long time no see" — no, that wouldn't do.

"Great weather!" — no, that's not it either.

"Hey, come here for a minute" — perhaps something along those lines, though she wasn't entirely sure.

No, am I completely clueless?! With her head hanging low and her fingernail between her teeth, Alma paced in circles near the entrance to the forest by the royal castle, muttering to herself ominously. To an outside observer, she would undoubtedly appear eccentric, but fortunately, there was not a soul around to witness her peculiar behavior. Yet, it did little to alleviate her situation. She was grappling with the dilemma of how to address Magsarion.

The truth was, their last meaningful conversation had taken place over twelve years ago, leaving her clueless as to where to even begin. She had considered asking Quinn to introduce them, but Quinn was evidently preoccupied with her own affairs, and it would be awkward to ask for a favor now. And even if it did come to that, the prospect itself was not encouraging. The mere thought of Kaikhosru and Magsarion butting heads made her stomach knot with anxiety.

She already regretted accepting the invitation, yet her heart fluttered at the opportunity to reunite with an old friend, which in turn angered her at her own sentimentality... So she continued to walk in circles, both literally and metaphorically, losing track of time. Unbeknownst to her, the sun had already begun its descent beyond the horizon.

"Hey"



Anyway, when she thought about the outcome five days later, she didn't want to make a storm here. For the time being, she is in a position where she have to manage the signing ceremony. That's why she had broken her bones.

"Hey"

But she still wonders if it's okay to establish such an alliance. Rather, isn't it her duty to use this as an opportunity to steer him in order to defeat Kaikhosru? Even while saying so, even Alma herself doesn't quite understand why she can't take a step forward...

"Hey."

Regardless of her internal turmoil, the noise coming from the side began to irritate her, causing her to raise her head and snap,

"What?! Can't you see I'm busy here?"

"It interests me what you're up to."

With those words, a tall figure emerged before her, the very cause of her distress. Startled, Alma jumped back and let out a scream akin to a startled cat, her eyes bulging in the figure's direction. Resting his sword on his shoulder, Magsarion appeared to sigh beneath his visor.

"I'm tired of your antics. If you have something to say to me, speak now."

"Ah, well... I apologize."

Apparently, he had long deduced that Alma had come to see him. Magsarion had grown weary of her indecision and had taken it upon himself to approach her. In a way, such an act could also be considered unusual behavior. This man, devoid of any sense of propriety, always forging his own path, had interrupted his training to engage in a conversation with his childhood friend— a nearly miraculous occurrence. Although it bewildered Alma, it also brought her joy, causing her heart to race faster.

"Well, how should I put it... I was asked to deliver something to you, so here I am. Take a look at this."

Even amidst her own internal disarray, Alma managed to choose her words without hesitation, straightening her hair and attending to other minor details. With every beat of her heart, echoing

like a hammer in her ears, she spoke with unwavering determination. She understood that any unnecessary words would prompt him to turn away, so she got straight to the point.

Magsarion took the letter into his hands and silently acquainted himself with its contents.

"What will you do? No one is pressuring you, so if you're against it, I can relay the message... The meeting is scheduled in Arzang, so if we agree, we'll head straight into the dragon's lair. There's also an option to move it here to give you an advantage. In the best-case scenario, we may even strip Kaikhosru of his power and defeat him..."

"No, let's go."

"Is that really what you want?!"

Enthusiasm resonated in Alma's question, and Magsarion couldn't help but laugh.

"Why are you so thrilled? Do you want me to die?"

"N-no, not in that sense..."

Deliberately choosing the least advantageous option was characteristic of Magsarion, and he fulfilled Alma's expectations by doing so. The feeling was simple and out of place, but Alma couldn't help but be pleased that she could somewhat understand Magsarion.

Moreover, it seemed that he trusted her as a messenger. Alma was well aware that this trust wasn't entirely genuine, but being able to assist him in this urgent matter brought her a sense of satisfaction.

The black knight cast a quiet gaze down at Alma, a gaze so cold it seemed to pierce right through her, chopping her into pieces. It instilled a sense of terror, yet she couldn't help but rejoice. After all, for whatever reason, the gaze that had remained unanswered for so long had finally found its response.

"Can I come with you?"

"Of course. It's written right here."

Admitting her helplessness at last, Alma couldn't suppress her smile or even contemplate hiding it. And then, the rest was inconsequential. After teleporting to Arzang, they both headed to the designated meeting point indicated by Kaikhosru. The city, once ravaged by murderers, had never

been rebuilt, and various debris still littered the streets. However, it was difficult to deem it as abandoned ruins, for lush greenery spread in every direction. Kaikhosru had stripped these lands of their status as a settlement, transforming them into something akin to his personal resort. Tropical fruits and exotic flowers fought for space in the sunlight, a display of opulence befitting the Demon King and his ideals of domination and subjugation. A sense of hopelessness still permeated the surroundings, but within the reach of Kaikhosru's influence, a completely different world had taken root. It was the garden of a rapacious serpent, who claimed the lives and tears of his subjects without a trace. In the heart of this domain, where the crystal palace once stood, a clearing had been made, and Kaikhosru sat alone upon a platform.

Cross-legged on the grass, he held a partially consumed drink in his hand. Beside him towered a mountain of bananas, melons, mangoes, papayas, pineapples, and various other fruits, a clear indication of his readiness for an impending feast.

"And here you are. Well, sit down. Let's have a drink."

With a dismissive gesture, he beckoned them toward him. Alma sighed at Kaikhosru's insolent demeanor, but Magsarion, standing nearby, strode forward without hesitation and took a seat directly opposite Kaikhosru. Alma hurriedly followed suit, settling herself on the grass. Their host observed her with childlike delight, a mischievous smile playing upon his lips.

"I apologize for summoning you so abruptly, but I was confident you would come. You're not the type to shy away from any battle, no matter what it may be."

His tone seemed as though he was speaking to an old friend, yet the underlying meaning behind his words made Alma furrow her brow. Kaikhosru declared that this was no ordinary gathering for drinks; it was a true battlefield. Alma hadn't been particularly optimistic that their meeting would consist of mere pleasantries, but such an overt declaration heightened the tension in the air. Magsarion, on the other hand, remained as calm and composed as ever, pushing the conversation forward, hinting with his demeanor that he had not encountered anything new.

"So, what did you want to discuss with me?"

"Don't be in such a hurry. I merely wanted to confirm something, to look ahead. Sirius and I have discussed this to some extent, but it wouldn't hurt to discuss our 'duties' with you as well. You want to kill 'everyone,' don't you?"

Casually dropping such a weighty statement, Kaikhosru spread his hands with grandiosity.

"More accurately, it's that I can't and won't settle for anything less. It's a pity, of course, but it does have its benefits. Personally, I would prefer not to shed my own blood or that of others. Instead, I'd rather bask in pleasure, drowning in wine and women. I'll leave the dirty work to you, and I'll continue to observe from the sidelines until my time comes. That's why I'd like us to assess each other's potential now and avoid unnecessary conflicts."

In other words, the battle he spoke of boiled down to the following: Magsarion's knack for slaughter would become a tool for Kaikhosru to eliminate external enemies. It was difficult to imagine a better assistance than having someone capable of slaying titans like Bahlavan or Khvarenah without shedding a drop of their own blood. Magsarion himself would eventually become the greatest threat. Indifferent to the "dirty work," Kaikhosru preferred minimizing his own exposure to danger.

"As long as Sirius and I exist, the fall of Avesta is inevitable. When Nadare finally gets down to business, you will kill her."

"How about your loyal mutt? And your lips, are they still as foolish as ever?"

"You don't like them? Well, that's why I want you to assess my potential."

The battle Kaikhosru spoke of involved the dragon revealing his "position" to the wrathful warrior—as a king and a hegemony. He didn't seek absolute loyalty; if Magsarion agreed to dance to his tune even to some extent, it would be satisfactory. That was the essence of this feast.

"So, have a drink. Or would you prefer something to eat?"

With those words, Kaikhosru tossed a pitaya in their direction. However, Magsarion made no attempt to catch it, and the scarlet fruit bounced off his chest. Though different reaction wasn't expected, it clearly highlighted the complete incompatibility between the two sides.

"Hmm, it's not that you don't want to, but more like you can't?"

Kaikhosru's words cut through the air, his voice heavy with a mix of pity and disdain. Magsarion's gaze burned with fury beneath his visor, his whole demeanor radiating a readiness to attack. The thirst for blood emanating from him was suffocating, and his voice held a weight that matched his lethal presence.

Yet, Kaikhosru remained unfazed, as if the spirit of the black knight was nothing more than a passing breeze. He turned his attention to Alma, as if she held the key to some intriguing puzzle.

"And how did you manage to tolerate this thorn for so long? You've piqued my curiosity."

Alma sighed wearily, her concern evident as she glanced at Magsarion, fearing his unleashed wrath. She chose to keep her distance, dismissing herself as merely an observer.

"Yes, well... What's the difference? In general, if you want to talk, then talk to him. I'm just here on as baggage."

"No, it's not like that. I called you here because I wanted to talk to you, and now you are in my domain. So, it's up to me to decide when, with whom, and how to talk."

Alma's cold objection was met with a pompous response from Kaikhosru, leaving her exasperated. The ignored Magsarion's potential eruption added to her unease.

"You always act on whims, disregarding any conventions," she retorted, her weariness seeping into her voice.

"Ha-ha-ha! And you understand me well, I'm glad of that!"

Alma's cynical injection seemed to please him, and a wide smile spread across his face. He leaned forward, delving into the next line of inquiry.

"By the way, if I may ask, how do you see the two of us, him and me?"

"What kind of men? Well..."

Alma was taken aback by the question, its apparent absurdity leaving her momentarily lost for words. She understood that until she answered, the conversation would not progress. Even Magsarion's presence exuded an inexplicable pressure. After a brief pause, she managed to form an incoherent response, still grappling with the strange interrogation.

"You... You're just a childish individual who has been granted too much power. That was my initial impression. At first, I thought you were a despot who only warms up to those who pique your interest. I don't know what it is about rejecting the captivity of **Avesta**, but you gave off the air of a child playing king."

"That's clear. However, as I understand it, now you think differently?"

“I just don’t think about it— I don’t want to say that I have a better opinion of you. Unlike other concubines, Roxanne is not so simple. Not in terms of strength, but as a woman: you can’t put her on a par with the rest, so it’s hard for me to imagine that a petty man like you deserves her sympathy.”

In the depths of recollection, a tale emerges— the tale of Kaikhosru, a figure resilient against the relentless onslaught of the Collapse. Contemplating this remarkable feat and the cataclysmic event that spurred it, the enigma surrounding the dragon king intensifies, its complexity deepening with every passing moment.

For Alma, burdened with the weight of this perplexing narrative, the task of articulating her assessment becomes an arduous endeavor. The right words seem to elude her grasp, slipping through her fingers like elusive whispers. However, much to her astonishment, it is Magsarion who steps forward, seamlessly assuming the role of the orator, bringing forth the words that eluded her.

"My opposite."

"Maybe so."

The two men began a dialogue, seemingly prearranged, leaving Alma puzzled yet intrigued. Perhaps, in some sense, she had given them an unspoken signal to begin.

"She called you a jerk, and I find myself in agreement with her assessment. But let me go a step further and declare that you surpass even the realms of jerkdom, ascending to a level of foolishness that may take an eternity to attain. Oh, it is truly a splendid accomplishment! Thank you for gracing us with your remarkable presence."

Magsarion voiced his sentiment with a trace of sarcasm. Kaikhosru, however, seemed unfazed by the comment, dismissing it with a nonchalant wave of his hand.

"Ah, but my dear friend, you misunderstand. That was not an insult, but rather a commendation of the highest order. When men deem each other fools, it is a testament to their camaraderie and respect. I humbly accept this accolade with utmost gratitude, and in return, I offer you a gift. As for you, my humble comrade, Magsarion, you are indeed a fine specimen, far from foolishness. Perhaps only the most ignorant of scoundrels would fail to comprehend this truth.

A hearty laugh escaped Kaikhosru's lips, finding amusement in his own jest, while Alma stood there, struck by astonishment. The essence of their banter remained elusive to her, for she had never encountered such an unconventional exchange. From her perspective, it seemed not even a jest but a puzzling declaration. Nevertheless, both participants accepted it as an unquestionable reality, proceeding with their conversation unabated.

"It is logical to understand the system in order to dismantle it, but you and Sirius lack a sense of wonder. They say all grief comes from the mind, while beauty comes from ignorance."

"Do you think you can accomplish it without unraveling the secret?" Magsarion questioned.

"It would be thrilling, but alas, my instincts are sharp from birth. I understood much without intentionally putting in much effort. Simply put, the world resembles a multi-layered toy."

Kaikhosru replied, picking up a mango and effortlessly revealing its contents. He held it up as if presenting a cherished truth.

"Didn't you have one of these? When you open a doll, there's another one inside, and if you open that, there's yet another, smaller one. The concept is simple, but it was invented by a true genius. It captures the essence. Every unit is actually a cluster of smaller particles. Humans, animals, and plants— they're all composed of genes or cells. Star Spirits like me are made up of even smaller organisms. What if the scale is even greater? Perhaps the stars are the cells of an even more immense creature. In that case, what would such a creature be called?"

Magsarion succinctly answered, "God?"

"Exactly." Kaikhosru grinned triumphantly, nodding in agreement.

Alma, frozen in place, could sense that the revelation carried weight for the men, as if they had known it all along.

"An organism called the 'Universe.' God named **Avesta**. In simple terms, we have been merely performing puppet shows, killing each other in the biological processes of the deity. There is no reason behind it. We were born as particles of such a being. Star Spirits serve as miniature examples: they harness the power of the stars, just as the universe colors everything with its destiny."

Kaikhosru, a Star Spirit who ascended by understanding the path of hegemony, had grasped the truth of the universe— the ability to devour the great creature from within, gaining status and power. He believed that just as a man can consume a star, the same could be done to the universe. With relentless passion, he sought to prove it. Returning to their earlier conversation, Kaikhosru addressed Magsarion's nature.

"You are too understanding. Your desire to comprehend every detail ends up chaining you to that knowledge, Magsarion. There's nothing wrong with appreciating knowledge, but it's akin to a cancerous tumor. Cancer destroys healthy cells, absorbing them, ultimately leading to the body's demise. Yes, its destructive potential is astonishing, but in the end, nothing remains. It's the pinnacle of genocide— every living thing vanishes without a trace. You lack the 'attraction' to preserve everything alone. Like cancer, like a blade, you believe that once you've killed everything, your job is done. You may think that you'll remain immutable, but is there truly any vibrancy in such an existence? You only know how to kill, and in doing so, you end up killing yourself."

Although she didn't understand much of Kaikhosru's theory, his last sentence was an exception.

"Magsarion will die..."

She just can't let that pass her ears.

"Let me speak candidly. His true nature, when revealed, struck me with an unexpected revelation. Surprisingly, Magsarion displays a deep-rooted cowardice, an overwhelming fear of the unknown that consumed his every thought. His unquenchable thirst for understanding became his shackles, binding him tightly in its relentless grip. It was as if he worshipped secrets, forever concealing his face, an ordinary facade that extinguished any hope of ascending to greatness. How could one bestow upon him the title of a king? Without possessing the fortitude to usurp the Divine Throne and claim its dominion, his only recourse was to accept his impending demise as a "reasonable" conclusion, an acceptance that whispered of his own insignificance."

In response to a caustic, but still full of compassion speech, Magsarion at first does not say anything, only remains silent.

"I won't die."

Magsarion responded firmly, refusing to succumb to Kaikhosru's persuasion.

"I won't yield to your persuasion. I will forge my own immutability, in my own way."



“Then will you follow the rules to the end and try to find a loophole in order to survive? Then you should hurry up. *You're already starting to disappear.*”

Kaikhosru chuckled at Magsarion's resolute reply, while Alma's pale face turned toward her childhood friend's iron visor. She realized that Kaikhosru's warning held more than metaphorical weight. There was something about Magsarion's hidden face, something she couldn't remember—his features, known only to her and the Holy King in the current Sacred Realm.

"Is there anything I can do?"

Alma's voice trembled, and Kaikhosru took a step back, carefully observing the unfolding scene. He anticipated her response, eager to glean new insights or treasures for his ever-burning curiosity. What kind of men did Alma see in Kaikhosru and Magsarion? She had never spoken about the latter, and Kaikhosru was intrigued to know.

It mattered little to him whether he gained fresh knowledge through her answer. The dragon wasn't bound by the desire to "know"; he simply yearned for new treasures to adore. The resplendent tapestry called "Man" was likely to evoke his deepest emotions.

"I care little for your thoughts, where your gaze wanders, and what actions you undertake... I shall remain silent on that matter. But I beg of you, do not disappear from my life!"

Alma's outcry pierces the air, causing Magsarion to turn his head towards her with an irked expression. The armor he wears emits an unkind creak in response.

"Since a young age, you have been altering the course of events. I still remember when you pleaded with me to cease fighting."

"Y-Yes... what else could I have done!?" she stammers, her face flush with embarrassment.

Compared to the ever-steadfast Magsarion, she is undeniably capricious. Her fickleness has been criticized, leaving her defenseless. And now, unintentionally, she allows her emotions to flow freely.

"You are always rushing off alone, leaving me behind. All I can do is panic, worry, and attempt to grasp even a sliver of understanding— sometimes, I find myself complaining aloud!"

"Sometimes?" Magsarion retorts, a hint of dry sarcasm in his voice.

"Well, perhaps... more than just sometimes!"

From Magsarion's perspective, her words may seem illogical, self-contradictory, and insufficiently nuanced for him to perceive their sincerity. What vexes Alma the most is that she now comprehends this herself.

"Just try to understand, you fool... Ordinary people like me struggle with such burdens,"

"Then disappear. No one is forcing you to accompany me," Magsarion coolly retorts.

"You always reduce it to that!" she exclaims, her eyebrows furrowed, as memories of a painfully familiar scene flash before her eyes.

It feels as if she has been transported back twenty years, when she still believed in the beauty of the world, and their quarrels were all too frequent. Though those times may have been unbearable for Magsarion, Alma cherishes every person she knew back then. She senses the importance of those memories, regardless of what he may say. Since he consistently disregards the emotions of others, she sees no reason to treat him with condescension.

"I know you do not harbor affection for me, but we both detest when things do not go our way. I have made up my mind that I would give my life for you. That is why I will not permit your demise."

"I have already told you, I am not going to die," Magsarion retorts.

"Do you truly believe that with the way you live? Can you not look at yourself objectively?"

This time, it is Alma who appears to put Magsarion in his place. He averts his gaze slightly, falling into silence. Alma seizes the opportunity to press on, but he raises his fervor once more, uttering words that freeze her in place.

"What, do you wish to kill me?"

This question, too, lacks logical coherence. Magsarion was just assured that they do not desire his demise, thus the query about wanting to kill him disrupts the chain of causality. Yet, in his eyes, the connection is undoubtedly present.

Realizing this, Alma bites her lip, endeavoring to express her genuine sentiments. Feelings that melt away like snow. Despite the steadfastness of her thoughts and the time spent harboring them, they are incredibly simple, and she unleashes them in a single breath.

"I... love you, Magsarion."

In her heart, she acknowledges the cursed nature of this love, but it is also her sole prayer, granting her the ability to immerse herself once more in the memories of sunlit days.

"Those were twenty years of torment of unbearable hardships, where it felt as if the world was crumbling, one calamity after another... and yet, amidst it all, you remained unchanged. That very fact has been my salvation, even to this day."

They say fate is a culmination of happenstance, but also the product of inevitable calculations. Perhaps it is more accurate to assume that if one's present life is fraught with adversity, then any past happiness was merely a sinister prelude.

But still...

Despite no longer possessing her innocence, and ever since her encounter with Magsarion descending further into the abyss of her own demise...

As long as her unwavering lover exists in this world, the days of tranquility from the past remain unscathed. They cannot be shattered. They cannot be tainted. Stay with him, now and forever.

"In my eyes, you are a true savior. Thank you for being alive."

And that is why she refuses to let him perish. The reason may be utterly self-serving, yet Alma's entire demeanor hints that she can redirect a similar accusation toward him. Unbeknownst to her, tears have welled up and escaped at some point.

"One or the other..."

Meanwhile, Magsarion mutters under his breath, as if wincing.

"I have no need for a face."

In an instant, he seizes his sword and swings it. A howling ebony streak seems destined to sever Alma's neck, but at the eleventh hour...

"Hey, hold on. What do you think you're doing with my woman?"

...Kaikhosru, observing from the sidelines, intervenes. His colossal scimitar intercepts Magsarion's frenzied blade, barely managing to halt its onslaught. The clash of crossed swords ignites a shower of sparks, as a scorching haze envelops the air. The dragon and the black knight lock eyes, equally consumed by bloodlust.

"I thought you had no interest in menial affairs?"

"That may be true, but what kind of ruler can I be if I cannot even save a single woman?"

Thus, they engage in a test of strength until the bitter end, until they are forcibly separated. And at that moment, Kaikhosru asserts his regal will: "I have reconsidered. I am going to kill you here".

In an instant, a thunderous roar resonates, the planet itself seemingly echoing the shockwave. Alma, standing nearby, remains unaffected by Kaikhosru's decree, but the very garden crumbles to its core. Before the speechless maiden, the two men exchange blows, casting up a dense cloud of dust.

"N-No, please... Stop..."

She tries to quell their conflict, reaching out her hand, but it proves futile. The state of affairs cannot be mended. Physically and mentally, Kaikhosru and Magsarion have drifted too far beyond Alma's grasp.

No, perhaps it is better to say that she has already done so, and thus cannot halt their course.

"She is truly cursed by your actions. To release her from this curse would be the greatest act of mercy."

"Take her wherever you please. I shall simply sever her head first."

Metal streaks through the air like shooting stars, leaving trails of luminous brilliance. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that among the living, Magsarion possesses the most extensive combat experience. However, Kaikhosru's martial prowess can only be described as untamed.

Roughness intertwines with grace, instinct melds with technique...

In strength, speed, and tactics, his power knows no flaws. He harbors no particular preference, making it impossible to assign a specific label to his style. Such a manner cannot be deemed natural. While he surely honed his skills to some extent, it is more likely that he acquired them by absorbing the abilities of others.

He is the embodiment of greed, an unyielding "lust" that lays claim to all the treasures of the world, seeing them as mere tools. One can even detect similarities to Varhran in the way he ruthlessly

assimilates those involved into his own military might. Magsarion, of course, has never witnessed the **Commandment** of his "brother" in action. Yet, an inner rage stirs within him, a premonition.

He must emerge victorious to surpass the revered hero he. In this unbearable confrontation, he has already gleaned many insights into Kaikhosru's character. The term "my opposite" was not bestowed lightly, and while it initially appeared as mere intuition, the rest of the puzzle pieces have fallen into place.

If he comprehends, he will discern.

If he discerns, he will exploit the gap.

And once created, he is capable of cleaving through anything and anyone.

A relentless, furious gaze burns with the fervor to locate the dragon's weakest point.

"It's not that I am deliberately concealing something, but I doubt you would grasp it."

On the other hand, Kaikhosru appears to dance, his blade biting like sharp fangs. If Magsarion sought to become faceless, then it is fitting to refer to Kaikhosru as an embodiment of that ideal. Although both lack a true visage, this man does not elicit differing opinions from external observers. When it comes to the sixth Demon King, all perceive him in much the same manner.

Proud. Avaricious.

A brilliant tyrant and usurper with an insatiable craving for luxury.

Undoubtedly, this is his true nature, and his true face is unmistakable. However, as mentioned before, he is excessively immature.

He is petty in all matters, but it is precisely this extreme pettiness that has elevated him to the status of a mountain supporting the heavens.

He does not conceal his emotions.

He does not lie.

Despite his impressive intellect and willingness to employ various stratagems, he rejects even the most basic logic.

In essence, he disregards calculations.

He possesses the audacity to trample upon what he has painstakingly accumulated, should his whims change.

The evidence lies in how he plotted to usurp the Divine Throne with Magsarion's assistance, only to condemn him to death moments later due to a blemish on Alma's tears.

After all, he is a king.

"You know, I simply cannot tolerate an equal exchange. Who came up with the notion that one must give something in order to receive?"

After all for in his eyes, everything in the world belongs to him...

As the blade crashes down from above, Magsarion emits a grating sound. Simultaneously, a shockwave surges from the ground, encircling him. Within his domain, any Star Spirit possesses the freedom to act as they please. Needless to say, such an act requires significant

strength and focus, yet Kaikhosru displays no signs of exhaustion. However, this stands in stark contrast to the Locust's Commandment.

"Well, ponder as much as you like. We have only just begun." With a smile adorning his face, Kaikhosru hurls himself into the attack, brimming with arrogance and impudence, devoid of sorrow or doubt.

He is utterly convinced that he is the one who takes, not the one from whom things are taken. However, it would be remiss to claim that he remains entirely composed in this battle.

With every passing minute, Magsarion's blade grows sharper, faster, drawing nearer to Kaikhosru's heart. Additionally, from the very onset of the conflict, the power of the Star Spirit holds no sway over Magsarion whatsoever.

Kaikhosru finds himself astounded by the unfolding events, a sense of unease creeping over him, barely restrained from transforming into outright horror. His vast experience leads him to believe that around the tenth impact, he will sustain severe injuries.

What course of action should he pursue now?

With the fourth strike, his hand grows numb from the reverberating shockwave upon blocking.

The fifth blow narrowly evades a devastating blow to the stomach.

Despite all this, the sixth strike goes unanswered by his own powers.

There is no alternative. He must expend all that he has. Inhaling deeply, the seventh strike... With his left arm severed at the shoulder, Kaikhosru bares his teeth in a foreboding grin.

"Surprised that you surpassed my predictions, but you have still fallen into my trap. Behold this."

In an instant, Magsarion realizes that his left hand has ceased to move, as if it were carved from wood...

"Do you appreciate the might of your own teist?"

A powerful surge of destruction crashes squarely into his face, propelling him backward. Simultaneously, the transformative power of transmuting into jewels comes into play. The body of the black knight crackles audibly, while his limbs gradually transmute into onyx.

"Forget it, forget it, once ensnared, there is no escape. After all, it was your own strength, and even an unyielding body will yield."

With his scimitar resting on his shoulder, Kaikhosru approaches Magsarion as his lost arm regenerates. However, from an external perspective, it may not be entirely accurate to describe it as "regeneration."

"Offering a complete hand, and receiving the same hand in return? I cannot agree; it appears we are now even. The score has been settled, and now I shall break you."

Kaikhosru approaches the kneeling Magsarion, extending his left hand to amplify his power. Yet, for some inexplicable reason, the limb convulses unnaturally. A soft, fleeting sound resonates as steel meets flesh.

Tilting his head, Kaikhosru witnesses Alma leaning against him from behind. She clasps a dagger in her trembling hands.

"It hurts..."

Dragon's blood trickles from the wound... Although Kaikhosru recognizes that Alma has wounded him, he feels no anger. On the contrary, restrained laughter escapes his throat, soon escalating into uproarious mirth...

"Ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!"

Throwing his head back towards the heavens, he unleashes a cry of joy. It may appear as though he has descended into madness, but alas, his sanity remains intact. Embracing Alma, who gazes up at him with wide eyes, he articulates his overwhelming emotions.

"So you have fallen so deeply in love with me that you managed to pierce me! Oh, how delighted I am, Alma. Nothing has ever pleased me to such an extent!"

"No! It can't be!"

Alma comprehends what Kaikhosru attempts to convey and trembles uncontrollably. The act itself was almost instinctual. Fearful for Magsarion's safety, she wished to aid him with her own hands and inadvertently plunged a dagger into the sixth Demon King. Indeed, she has pierced the Demon King. Yet, Alma's strength should not be sufficient to inflict harm upon dragon flesh, let alone a mere scratch...

Until she fulfills the conditions of her **Commandment**.

"It merely proves that you have opened your heart to me. Well, it is insufficient to bring about my demise, but it suffices as collateral. Considering that you also managed to save me from peril, I should express my gratitude."

"What are you saying? You never once crossed my mind..."

Alma attempts to deny it, but suddenly her eyes widen. Kaikhosru's left hand convulses like a grinning beast.

"Literally, the initiative is suspicious. Oops, stay away from me for a while. This guy is so ferocious, if he kept going like that, I might be the one who died."

Releasing Alma from his grasp and stepping back, Kaikhosru grins malevolently, restraining his rampaging left hand. The petrification continues at its steady pace. This implies that he did not cancel it, yet he has not completed it either. The transformation is underway, albeit at an excruciatingly slow rate. He feels the silent black knight's gaze upon him, brimming with unmasked bloodlust.

Is it the shame of defeat, or the fury of missing his quarry?

Whatever the reason, the outcome of this battle remains uncertain.



"I shall claim her for myself. If you do not object, attempt to unleash your powers and come for her. Next time, I will take everything from you."

Turning his back on Magsarion, Kaikhosru drapes his arm around the bewildered Alma and leads her away. He is not entirely satisfied with the result either. Thus, the drama unfolds further, bolstering their morale.

Certainly, he does not indulge in baseless bravado, but he is prepared to exert every effort to attain a woman of exceptional caliber.

Yes, indeed, a woman. **Avesta** must be a woman, and it is in her that he finds his desire; intoxicated by such dreams, the dragon remains enthralled to this day.

## Chapter 14: Wings of Darkness

### 1

It felt as though hours had slipped away since we had set foot inside Quinn's Castle, forsaken by the severing ritual. Not a single noteworthy discovery had been made, nor did any seem likely.

We aimlessly roamed in circles, leaving me to ponder our predicament once again. Naturally, we had meticulously examined every room in the castle, scrutinizing even the contents of cabinets and drawers. The search, as it were, could be considered exhaustive. Yet, despite our thoroughness, the outcome remained zero. Perplexed, we contemplated if there was something new we had missed.

Surprisingly, Quinn's lifestyle appeared remarkably modest, incongruous with the opulent decor of the castle. Admittedly, **Ashavans** are not known for their extravagance, and I understood that Quinn was, in essence, a recluse. Nevertheless, even considering these factors, something seemed amiss. Though the thought continued to haunt me, our relentless search yielded no significant findings, prompting our retreat to the ground floor hall.

"Surely, sir, in this dreary castle, we could at least indulge in a game of rolling a ball. I find myself quite bored," Ashozushta remarked.

"No one intended to entertain us, and indeed, one wonders if we are wasting our time. If we are to press on, we must approach the problem from a different angle," I responded.

"True, of course, but how?

Truth be told, I had been convinced that the situation would change upon entering the castle. After all, we had been invited here, naturally anticipating some sort of reception. However, reality proved otherwise. Not only were we not received, but we were left entirely alone in an empty house. Until we understood the cause of this discrepancy, progress would elude us.

"It doesn't appear as though we've been ensnared in some sort of enchantment. There must be a secret passage somewhere. Our first task is to determine its precise location."

"Are we really to grapple with passwords and puzzles, sir? It seems rather tedious. Perhaps demolishing everything to the ground would be easier, sir."

"No, I would prefer that we not stoop to such a crude approach. A-chan, impatience is understandable, but we must avoid anything that might exacerbate our situation. Partly because I wish to preserve this castle, a testament to Quinn's memory, and partly because it strikes me as perilous."

"We are here at Quinn's behest. Who knows how she would react if we were to destroy the castle, showing hostility towards her."

"But we won't accomplish anything with all this caution, sir. Moreover, the hospitality here leaves much to be desired."

"Perhaps that is the case..."

My response lingered in the air as Fer interjected with a sigh, "Let's not argue. At least we have a target."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. It is most likely that the passage resides within the master's bedroom. If there were any room off-limits to outsiders, that would be the prime candidate. From there, we'll need to try everything systematically."

"That does seem more preferable to scouring the entire castle."

Although currently no more than a hypothesis, narrowing down the scope of our search constituted progress. Fer's pragmatism proved invaluable, as my restless state contrasted with his composure.

Ashozushta, however, seemed unconvinced. She sighed and muttered indignantly, "I was pondering what was amiss, but he remains obstinate with his conventional approach, sir. I'm uncertain if such a typical strategy will prove helpful, sir."

"I understand that you have reservations. What do you propose, then?"

"I don't know. It's just that your plan is dreadfully dull, sir. Besides, Quinn herself is rather unremarkable, sir."

"I assure you, no one here will provide entertainment. And in any case, you—" I interrupted, but Ashenka swiftly cut me off.

"Wait a moment, Fer. A-chan, what did you say?"

I leaned in closer, and Ashenka looked at me wide-eyed in surprise.

"W-What are you doing? I'm not scolding you; there's no need to be so agitated."

"I am aware of that. Yet, why do you find Quinn 'unremarkable'?"

"Ah, well, it's just that Quinn called you, Quinn, but... Oh, darn it! How awkward!"

Ashozushta stumbled over her words, growing flustered. Though her thoughts became muddled, Ashenka scratched her head, grumbled, and began to speak rapidly, "She lacks any sense of dignity, sir. Little Fer mentioned something about Quinn's bedroom, but it hardly resembles a mistress's quarters. I would sooner describe it as a servant's room or some such, sir."

Thus, she saw no reason to construct theories around Quinn. This perspective struck me to the core.

Quinn was not the master of this castle...

Was that why her modest lifestyle had troubled me so?

Despite her imperfections, Ashozushta presided over the Sky Burial Sphere, which likely prompted her questions regarding Quinn and her status as a leader. In essence, Quinn was more akin to a servant. Viewing things from this angle, many puzzle pieces fell neatly into place.

The castle did not possess the characteristics of a dwelling; rather, it resembled a serene ceremonial space, almost like a temple. So, Quinn must have been a priestess of sorts.

But what exactly did she serve?

As I pondered this, countless threads in my mind began to converge. Even the connection I felt with her prior to my birth was not a mere coincidence.

It held a deeper cause-and-effect relationship, one that led to the wrath of His Majesty Sirius. Once upon a time, the Divine Sword did some harm to Quinn. And she did this not face to face, as an equal to her, but as if a superior trampled on the one who stands below.

The pieces of the puzzle were gradually aligning.

"I am the mistress of this castle," I whisper, and in that instant, a grand staircase unfurls before us, stretching wide on either side.

While Fer and Ashozushta stand in awe, I regard this unfolding spectacle as nothing short of natural. Indeed, it was Quinn who beckoned her mistress to this place. Until now, the path had remained concealed, concealed by my own lack of self-awareness.

"Let us proceed. That is where we shall find what we seek."

I gesture toward the newly revealed descent, urging my still-astonished companions forward.

The sensation of déjà vu intensifies, and though a faint sense of trepidation tugs at me, as if my former self whispers secrets into my ear, I refuse to be deterred.

For the true adversary I must confront is the Divine Sword herself, and I have no recourse but to confront her transgressions head-on.



Kaikhosru was entranced by a recurring dream, the only one he had ever known in his entire life. This time was no exception. In this dream, he witnessed his younger self from an external perspective, reliving the memories of days long gone. It was a vivid reproduction of the moment when unbridled anger had consumed him, leading him down the path that defined his existence.

It all began with a loss, though the specifics eluded him. Something had slipped through his fingers, and it ignited an all-consuming desire within him to reclaim it.

The exact nature of the loss didn't matter to him; it could have been money, a toy, or even a family member. Perhaps he had simply let a dog perish, but such sentimental details were inconsequential to him.

What mattered was the absence of something tangible, and he lacked the sentimentality to chase after mere memories. The fact that he needed to uncover the essence of what was lost in order to mend the void didn't trouble him either. The mere existence of a reason was enough to spur him into action, shaping his way of life from that moment forward.

After all, the great will had promised him that as long as he adhered to the rules, happiness would inevitably find him.

The Dragon Crystal Star... As Roxanne had once told Alma, during Kaikhosru's time as an **Ashavan**, their planet adhered to a strict code. These were known as the Destiny Commandments, powerful shackles imposed by the Star Spirit upon its own cells, akin to a miniature **Avesta**.

Although these **Commandments** were specific to the denizens of the Dragon Crystal Star, their wholehearted obedience, devoid of ulterior motives, almost made it seem as if they were intertwined with the fabric of 'her' machinations.

Unlike individual **Commandments**, this encompassed their entire way of life, as natural as water flowing from high to low, and it was regarded by all as common sense.

Roxanne had already described its essence in great detail. A few select **Drujvants** were captured as sacrifices, and various forms of mockery were directed towards them, promising salvation. It served as a means to efficiently manage collective property and provided an endless source of entertainment.

During Kaikhosru's **Ashavan** days, he had accepted this as a matter of course. It was common sense, and there was no reason to doubt it. The young man yearned desperately, driven by an ardent desire to regain what he had lost. He made up his mind to offer a **Drujvant** as payment.

However, as long as he could remember, it had been time for a change of victim in his city. The previous one had been completely exhausted, and he had to endure his dissatisfaction until new "resources" were found.

The wait became unbearable for him.

There was no clear system as to when and where the next victim would appear. Sometimes they were born right within the commune, while at other times, they had to be sought for decades, relying solely on luck. From the Star Spirit's perspective, this might have been within the margin of error, but for the inhabitants, it was undeniably a matter of life and death.

Fifteen years had passed without a victim, and the entire community was becoming increasingly anxious. Kaikhosru himself couldn't bear to remain idle.

Thus, at the tender age of seven, he embarked on a quest for treasures, not as a full-fledged member of an adult search team but as a lone seeker. Perhaps he sought to claim the spoils solely for himself.

Yet, in the end, his endeavors proved fruitless. Four years after he had left his homeland, news reached him that the sought-after **Drujvant** had been captured by another team. He had to abandon his attempts and return consumed by indignation.

From this, it became evident that during that time, Kaikhosru still embraced the collective mindset of the **Ashavans**. Even if he hadn't achieved his goal personally, as long as others had succeeded, it meant that everyone benefited, and he had to accept it.

Those thoughts dissipated when he returned home a year later and witnessed the scene that awaited him. A woman was crucified in the central square of the city, surrounded by a mob hurling stones and curses. Over the course of twenty years since the previous victim's demise, a deep-seated anger had accumulated within the people, and the woman found herself teetering on the brink of death, unable even to utter a scream.

Of course, this didn't mean that Kaikhosru sympathized with her. He remained an **Ashavan**, and thus he was filled with disgust and hostility toward the **Drujvant**.

Yet, he couldn't shake the feeling that something was amiss. Even the sight of the victim being devoured before his eyes failed to satiate him, only intensifying his thirst for fulfillment. But the Dragon Star Spirit had promised that tormenting her would bring him happiness.

So, why did this discontent persist, refusing to soothe his soul and instead swirling within him like a tempest of darkness?

Perhaps relying on others for everything simply wouldn't suffice.

Maybe everyone had taken it too lightly.

To test this hypothesis, Kaikhosru seized a sizable stone and hurled it with all his might.

Years of living alone had bestowed upon him a strength that even an adult would envy, for he had grown far stronger than those who led a sheltered life within the city.

The young man launched the stone with every ounce of his being, the muffled sound of impact rendering the surrounding onlookers speechless. The victim convulsed and emitted a pained groan after receiving a devastating blow to her face. Her gaze turned toward Kaikhosru, burning with a profound hatred. It was an expected result, a predictable reaction.

However, even after this act, happiness eluded him entirely. Consumed by thoughts of such injustice, Kaikhosru offered no resistance as the adults pulled him away, but he posed a single, poignant question.

"Why can't I find contentment? Doesn't the rule of equal exchange dictate that my void should be filled through sacrifice? Answer me, God! Why did you break your promise on this earth?"

Kaikhosru's unwavering faith in the Dragon Crystal Star's rule had driven him to obsession. In truth, his belief in the flawless nature of destiny had led him to interpret it with excessive freedom.

Indeed, the Star Spirit had constructed its system on the foundation of equal exchange. Any **Commandment** entailed a reward in exchange for payment, and Kaikhosru was not misguided in his hopes that abiding by this rule would grant his wishes. However, the dragon God's objective solely revolved around its own social welfare, with no regard for the salvation of each individual subordinate.

From the Star Spirit's perspective, the **Destiny Commandment** functioned in the following manner. For a white planet, inherently devoid of any black impurities, the presence of even a small number of **Drujvants** as shackles posed a genuine risk. In exchange, the unity among the **Ashavans** grew stronger, and the authority of the dragon deity expanded. It could be likened to vaccinating an individual with weakened microbes to fortify their immune system.

Thus, the **Commandment** was imposed upon all the subordinates, ensuring they functioned without hesitation, like cells within the Star organism. Free will was unnecessary. The Star Spirit

reasoned that as long as they mindlessly carried out their designated tasks like a colony of microorganisms, the promised "happiness" would manifest as a mere fluctuation of mood.

It had little to do with the immediate restoration of a home devastated by a natural disaster or the instantaneous healing of a sick patient— forms of help that were blatantly apparent. The dragon deity had merely ensured that nothing disrupted their contentment, providing only fruitless satiation akin to narcotic hallucinations. This stark contrast to the pragmatic reward Kaikhosru desired left him perpetually dissatisfied.

His resilience was not so weak that venting malice upon the victim could satiate him. In this sense, he surpassed the dragon deity's expectations, emerging as an essence that exceeded their conception. Born as a consequence of the prolonged rule, he firmly believed in the righteousness of inheritance.

Kaikhosru deemed the planet's greatest creation and thus its greatest failure, remained convinced that salvation awaited him, unable to find solace in any form of obsession.

From that moment onward, he continued inflicting cruel torment upon the victim. Each time, those around him reproached his actions, and he faced confinement. Yet, these experiences failed to teach him anything, and he consistently managed to escape, driven by the longing for an equivalent exchange to be fulfilled. Through this process, an odd sense of warmth began to develop within the victim towards him, but such trivial matters held no significance for him.

He merely waited, asking himself, "When will my efforts be rewarded? When?"

Until the fateful day finally arrived. As he gazed upon the scarlet tongues of flames raging ferociously, the realization struck him that the abyss within him would never be filled.

A mad scream erupted from the depths of his being— a single furious word, akin to a curse unleashed upon the world.

“Why?!”

In the embrace of his awakening consciousness, Kaikhosru received a resounding answer.

"To put it simply, there is nothing in the world that could fulfill my requirements," he muttered, a mix of determination and resignation coloring his voice.



With the realization that heaven would not grant him his desires, he embraced a different path—one of conquest and appropriation.

If offerings were futile, then he would seize everything for himself, leaving nothing behind.

Thus, Kaikhosru embarked on his quest to establish his own rule, starting with claiming the victim as his own.

After all, she rightfully belonged to him, and if leaving her under the existing inheritance would only lead to her demise, he saw no reason to delay his actions.

Breaking the **Divine Commandment** became inconsequential to him, for he deemed the dragon deity beneath his dignity and unworthy of his consideration. And so, with unprecedented audacity, he initiated a rebellion, aiming to usurp the throne of the Star Spirit. However, even in his audacity, he made a mistake.

Alongside the change in color brought forth by the Collapse, he also inherited the reversed **Commandment**.

It gnawed at him, disquieting his mind.

After all, the **Commandment** was originally the Dragon Deity's, accepted without regard for Kaikhosru's personal opinion. Yet, the consequences remained, lingering like the karma of a past life, dampening his spirits. While he did improve his situation, receiving equivalent rewards for his endeavors, the underlying principle of equal exchange persisted. His aspiration to amass all the world's treasures without losing anything still demanded compensation for every action he took.

The origin of this predicament was clear as day. Kaikhosru could interpret it in no other way but as the influence of an entity superior to the dragon deity. He saw no other explanation as to why he surpassed the planet's destiny yet remained imprisoned within the old value system. The **Destiny Commandment** and the **Avesta** were similar in principle, and he didn't differentiate between them greatly.

However, the Collapse heightened his sensitivity to the latter, deepening his longing, mingled with malice and respect, for the creature responsible for this chaotic universe.

He felt drawn to 'her,' the entity that birthed this world, akin to falling in love. It was out of a sense of gratitude, viewing 'her' as his own mother, that he yearned to appropriate all of her possessions—a greedy desire to compensate for his initial loss.

He felt as though he would awaken soon, and with resignation, Kaikhosru slowly opened his eyes. Before him, he beheld a lavishly adorned palanquin, and a soft warmth emanated from his side.

"Are you awake, my king?" a gentle voice called out. Kaikhosru turned his head, finding the beautiful face of Sapphire Princess Fatima, the fourth in seniority but second only to Roxanne in age.

Fatima, too, had been a victim designated by the previous dragon deity, and like Roxanne, memories of her time as a victim lingered within her soul.

"For happiness, admiring your face is enough for me," Fatima expressed, a faint smile gracing her lips.

"You still lack ambition."

"Well, as you wish. Soon, you will bid farewell to old dreams. If you wish to revisit them later, don't blame me."

Fatima harbored a deep aversion to sleep. It was due to the dreams of her past, where memories of her victimhood resided. These dreams brought not only horror and shame but also something else.

"I will never forget him. No matter what lies ahead, I will cherish the day I met you. In fact, I believe that every dream about him only diminishes his essence. Thus, I decided to protect him," she confided.

Kaikhosru chuckled, dismissing her concerns: "You're still too modest, my dear."

As Kaikhosru rose from his slumber, he murmured to himself, then sat up in bed, stretching his tired limbs and yawning. He understood the fickleness of memory, how its radiance waned and transformed into a mere symbol when the same topic was repeatedly brought up.

Thus, he acknowledged the conservatism in Fatima's desire to protect their shared memories, yet he saw the logic behind it and had no intention of reproaching her for it.

For Kaikhosru, the ultimate solution to the problem lay in remaining eternally unchanged in the hearts of his beloved women. If he could enchant them with a radiance that would endure, unaffected by the passage of time, then the issue would naturally resolve itself. And he believed that this day would arrive soon, when his captivating aura would never fade, regardless of how much it was drawn upon.

Fatima remained lying on her side, her gaze fixed upon Kaikhosru's courageous grin. Her eyes, still partially closed from drowsiness, reflected trust and love, albeit with a tinge of melancholy hidden within their depths.

"Has your health not improved?" she inquired, concern lacing her words.

Kaikhosru, unperturbed, replied, "Hmm? Ah, if that's what you're referring to, fret not. Initially, he put up quite a fight, but as you can see, he has since calmed down.

To reassure his concubine, Kaikhosru boldly extended his left hand, revealing the trophy he had acquired from Magsarion on the previous day.

"It appears he has finally recognized my worth and surrendered," he stated, a hint of amusement in his voice.

However, Fatima was skeptical: "You must be joking. I don't see him as someone who easily bends to others' will."

"You always speak when no one asks," Kaikhosru retorted, his smile fading but without a trace of anger.

He understood Fatima's propensity to worry about minor details, especially when it concerned the future. Yet, he forgave her for it, recognizing the value in her nature. While his other concubines might jest and tease him, it was only Fatima who genuinely cared for his well-being. And although he may not openly admit it, he harbored similar concerns himself.

In exchange for his relentless expenditure of wealth, his **Commandment** bestowed upon him guaranteed compensation for what he had spent. Enduring countless hardships, he had amassed abundant trophies. This confidence in himself was rooted in his experiences, yet his true pride remained elusive due to the nature of his strength. Kaikhosru was still bound by the unwelcome rule of equal exchange.

His unwavering determination to seize the Divine Throne, to paint the world in his own colors, and to reclaim everything he had sacrificed labeled him as "wasteful."

Rejecting the very notion of "spending," he teetered constantly on the precipice of breaking his **Commandment**. It was hard to fathom that this time he would be limited to a single downfall. If it came to that, it would be the end. And so, he approached the battle with Magsarion's left hand, his mind burdened with the weight of responsibility. However, this did not mean that Kaikhosru was prone to despondency.

"Fear not. I shall not yield to anyone," he assured his concubine, embracing her once again, his countenance exuding a calm serenity.

Meanwhile, his thoughts delved into the past, to the conversation he had shared with Alma right after acquiring that severed hand.

"What kind of world do you envision?"

Alma's eyes burned with intensity, and her expression betrayed her unwillingness to accept anything less than a direct answer. A hint of anticipation lingered within her gaze, and Kaikhosru experienced a sadistic joy in that moment.

"Most likely, there will be no 'death' in the conventional sense. Imagine a world of rebellious freedom, devoid of decay, where laughter and the pursuit of one's desires prevail."

Alma, pale and speechless, gazed up at Kaikhosru, sweeping her hand dismissively, as if negating his ideal.

"That would be a living hell. Blood would flow more than ever before. But there would be no limits."

"What's wrong with a little hell, Alma? I would simply give free rein to their desires. Those who wish to fight shall fight, and those who wish to flee shall flee. 'Everyone' would be free to do as they please. Without order, there would be no room for regret, and no one would have to rely on the mercy of good or evil."

The system he proposed embodied what could be called chaos. Living under the law of iniquity, everyone would indulge in their own desires. Furthermore, in a world without death, it was easy to imagine that individuals would cast aside the shackles of common sense.

"Some argue that death promises salvation, but it is merely an excuse for those afraid to embrace their desires and fail. It is a selfless desire to deceive oneself, as it is far easier to preemptively abandon something before it is taken away. But what if failure is impossible? If one knows that they will never part with their life under any circumstances, then they would willingly plunge off a cliff."

"It's shortsighted. Even if life is filled with everything, it's torture to keep running without end. There may be a concept of the ability to live, but there is no end to desire itself. What you want is born one after another, and if you do not have it, you will try to create it."

"There is no time to get tired of it."

"How can you say that?"

"..."

Alma struggled momentarily to find a response to Kaikhosru's audacious proclamation before finally exhaling.

"So... your world, in the end, will be nothing more than a puppet show."

"I cannot deny that", Kaikhosru conceded calmly.

Ultimately, the rule of any deity amounted to dictatorship. Policies would be enforced without room for dissent, and he acknowledged this truth.

"However, I have no intention of governing anything. I delight in both smiles and tears, anger and mourning. I wish to experience the raw emotions of all. Therefore, I will create a stage upon which they can be freely expressed. I tell you, I disdain narrow perspectives, and thus, I shall grant everyone free rein."

"And do you believe this will be salvation?"

"If you so desire, create it. Envision the kind of epilogue you yearn for."

Kaikhosru boasted that he possessed the ability to shape any future for himself, to wrest it away from others as attraction dictated. He asserted that, in exchange for such callousness and ruthlessness, his draconian rule would banish all humility from the universe.

"I understand... It pains me to admit it, but there may indeed be some allure to it."

In response, Alma's fading voice murmured, "But I am disappointed, not in you, but in my own foolishness..."

Closing her eyes and bowing her head, she seemed to chastise herself. She admitted that she had scrutinized Kaikhosru's words so closely because she had harbored hopes for his world. And, of course, those hopes were tied to her childhood friend.

"I thought that perhaps, in this new world, Magsarion could exist. Since he seemed to be destined to vanquish the current era, I believed he would fade away once his task was complete... I had contemplated this even before you spoke of it. I feared that future, mourned over it, for it was unbearable to contemplate... It seemed to me that if someone else were entrusted with the role of decide, Magsarion's fate could be altered."

"So, it matters little who creates the new world and how flawed it may be, as long as he does not perish?"

"I confess, such was my desire," Alma admitted.

And perhaps, if fortune smiled upon them, if one miracle intertwined with another... That was the sentiment reflected in Alma's eyes. She dared to dream that in this new world, she could walk alongside him once more.

"I am utterly clueless as to how this can be achieved. Perhaps my hopes are entirely unfounded, but if it can even slightly improve Magsarion's chances of survival, then I shall place my trust in you as well. There might have already been something within me thinking along similar lines, which is why..."

Alma silently nodded, and Kaikhosru gazed at her for a moment before breaking into a smile.

"Indeed, it makes sense. So, it wasn't love for me that drew your loyalty, but rather your concern for him. I was so desperate that I started overcomplicating everything, and it's almost endearing."

"Stop. Do not touch me!"

Alma pushed away the hand that was reaching out to caress her head, and Kaikhosru, with a carefree expression, pulled back.

"And what then? Are you disappointed in yourself? Will you logically reason that you accepted my dominion out of a momentary weakness?"

"... "

"Of course, you can do as you please, but let me tell you this: logic can never conquer desire. Once you have tasted the forbidden fruit, your soul will forever yearn for what it desires."

"Allow me... one question," Alma suddenly looked up and asked in a serious tone. Kaikhosru attentively awaited her query.

"Why do you suddenly love me so much? I cannot recall any reason why I would deserve such affection, and it does not seem like an ordinary whim at all. To be honest, it rather repulses me."

"You're quite prickly, aren't you? Personally, I believe that seeking motives in matters of love is the epitome of vulgarity, but well..."

Picking at her ear with a finger, Kaikhosru answered without embellishment, "Well, because you are alike."

"Alike? Is it because of Roxanne?"

"That is true as well, but I mean it in a 'higher' sense."

Perplexed, Alma furrowed her brow, but the dragon chose to leave the answer open-ended. She interpreted it as him not wanting to dedicate it to her, and with a sigh, Alma dropped the topic.

"Alright, enough of that. I have no intention of becoming your possession, so it was a futile inquiry. You may continue trembling in fear of Magsarion's shadow."

Pointing at his left hand, she continued, as if foretelling his fate, "He will undoubtedly return the favor. You will soon realize the true cost of that hand."

"I cannot help but eagerly anticipate it. I cannot even recall a single one of my exchanges being unequal. If it somehow leads to a violation of my **Commandment**, I would welcome it."

"Enough with the banter. I am leaving, and you need not follow me."

With those words, Alma turned and departed, while Kaikhosru merely smiled warmly after her.

"My king, what occupies your thoughts so deeply?" the Sapphire Princess inquired.

"Oh, I have just realized once again how mysterious and complex women can be."

Returning from his reverie and back to reality, Kaikhosru gently caressed the cheek of the Sapphire Princess and chuckled lightly. In truth, his response was not entirely frivolous. He had paid dearly for each of his relationships with women, and it was not solely for the gratification of his carnal desires. He genuinely believed that women were more resilient creatures than men.

Take Fatima, for example. She often displayed an unbearable aspect of her character. Despite her usual meek and sometimes cowardly demeanor, she possessed an insatiable love for luxury. She would occasionally cross the boundaries that risked invoking Kaikhosru's wrath, or she would fret over trivial matters like a rebellion of subjects, defying explanation for such behavior.

However, both sides coexisted within her without much trouble. And such duplicity was not unique to her alone. Kaikhosru couldn't help but smile at how, following their conversation, Alma calmly returned to the new continent, diligently attending to her administrative duties. Her words did not align with her actions, and she appeared discontent with this aspect of herself, yet she showed no intention of changing.

Speaking of confusing others with a variety of words and actions, Roxana is also worth it. After all, she and Alma can even switch between black and white.

Roxanne, too, possessed the ability to speak one thing and do another, confusing those around her. If it came down to it, both Alma and Roxanne were capable of blurring the line between black and white, a testament to their enigmatic nature. In other words, from Kaikhosru's perspective, women always held contradictions yet managed to remain steadfast. They would effortlessly weather absurdity that most men would find unbearable and continue their graceful, elegant dance.

What was wrong with labeling it as power?

That was why he cherished them so deeply. If contradictions and absurdity were taken to their logical conclusion, this world itself would embody such a multitude.

Kaikhosru swore upon his very soul that he wished to embrace each and every one of them without exception.

To hold them, to desire them, to revel in a divine ecstasy with them.



"I may not entirely understand, but since you are in good spirits, I cannot wish for anything else," the Sapphire Princess remarked.

"Yes, you shall see, Sapphire. Soon, I shall allow your brilliance to shine even brighter than before."

Confidently nodding, the serpent made no attempt to conceal his own allure, eagerly anticipating the creation of a new world.

## 2

As we ventured further down the open passage, my premonitions were confirmed with each step. The sight before us only solidified my suspicions.

"Yes, but their devotion is almost excessive, sir. Frankly, it's somewhat repulsive."

"Indeed. Even Star Spirits nowadays aren't treated with such pomp. It seems the local lady held an even higher status."

Occasionally, their gazes fell upon me, causing a certain unease. Yet, I couldn't help but concur with their perspective. Our surroundings truly resembled a sacred temple. Although we merely walked along a straight corridor, the castle paled in comparison, resembling a mere barn. The adornments here were less opulent, yet the quality of the stone and other materials surpassed it exponentially. The walls diverged further apart, and the ceiling soared higher and higher. Moreover, both walls were adorned with numerous bas-reliefs and drawings that seemed to narrate a grandiose tale.

"The worship of a Goddess— or perhaps a savior? It appears they have preached it for a considerable time."

"They've even adorned her garments, sir."

"They may seem outdated now, but compared to the ones in Quinn's room, they are unquestionably more luxurious."

"So, it's some kind of relic?"

As Fer spoke, the drawings unveiled a captivating story of benevolent acts performed by a Goddess-like woman. Observing the variations in the number of depictions and the visual style across different epochs, it became evident that these events spanned centuries. The bas-reliefs also prominently featured the Goddess, clad in authentic priestly attire, suggesting she was once a living being. Notably, her countenance demanded particular attention. Despite variations in her depictions, attributed to different artists or eras, they all shared one defining characteristic...

"She somewhat resembles Quinn, sir."

Indeed, it was true. This place overflowed with information regarding my past life.

"I envisioned someone called the 'Divine Sword' to be more conspicuous, but evidently, she maintained a human appearance. Perhaps the Workshop of Annihilation had a hand in your creation, but in the end, you didn't undergo drastic changes," Fer mused.

"Let's not rush to conclusions. While I understand it's not my place to speak on this matter, we still lack sufficient knowledge," I cautioned.

In truth, two concerns nagged at me.

"The color of my eyes is different from what I am now. The woman in the picture is gold on the right and silver on the left... literally."

"By the way, that's true. It's also strange that there's no mention of His Majesty's wife anywhere. If her lineage has served the Divine Sword for generations, one would expect her to be depicted at least in the margins," Fer noted.

"Perhaps their union was kept hidden, although that explanation still feels inadequate. There must be another reason.

Lost in our thoughts, we were jolted back to reality by Ashozushta's exclamation.

"Let's go already! Less talk, more action!"

With an energetic cry, she dashed forward, not bothering to glance back at us. Fer and I exchanged glances, grinned, and sighed, acknowledging that we could only follow her lead. Before long, we arrived at the deepest chamber. The hall took the shape of a hemisphere, and in its center lay a small meadow of flowers. Illuminated by the light streaming through the ceiling window, it

resembled a sacred haven, detached from the world's sorrows. For a moment, it seemed as if a "blade" emerged from the ground...

"Kh!.."

"Hey, Quinn, what's wrong? Are you alright?" Fer questioned, concern etched on his face.

A piercing headache resonated in my ears, and as I instinctively grasped my head, I suddenly heard "her" voice.

**"Welcome back, O Lady Ahura Mazda."**

It was the soft and composed greeting of a mature woman. I wasn't the sole recipient of her words; Fer and Ashozushta also looked up in astonishment. And there she stood before us, her gentle form adorned with a captivating smile.

**"Since you have arrived here, it can be assumed that I am no longer in this world. Though unfortunate, I am grateful that fate has granted us another meeting. It appears you have managed to grasp some understanding of your priestess, albeit not entirely."**

" ..... BUT ?"

What?... So, what is this girl even talking about? She appeared out of nowhere too, sir!" Ashozushta exclaimed, bewildered.

"Wait, A-chan. I believe..."

She... Quinn's gaze falls upon us as she speaks, yet her appearance makes it clear that she is not human. As she just stated, she no longer exists in this world; she has transitioned to the next realm. What remains is a visual testament of her existence, akin to a letter that allows for no two-way communication.

**"Where should I begin my tale? I have served you faithfully for a considerable length of time, but I cannot guarantee that I will provide answers to all your inquiries. I beseech your forgiveness if my explanations come across as brusque, for I assume you have lost all recollection of your own memories."**

It astonishes me that she accurately discerns my current position. She carries herself with modesty, yet I am certain that no one possesses a more profound knowledge of the Divine Sword than she does.

"Pardon me... but might I request a moment of silence?"

I yearn to listen intently to her words. Thus, I direct my sincere appeal to Fer and Ashozushta and shift my undivided attention towards Quinn. She appears to grasp my reaction, pausing briefly before embarking on her narration.

**"You are Ahura Mazda... The greatest weapon of our righteous faction, existing since the inception of the world. Perhaps it is more fitting to refer to you as the Divine Sword? Indeed, your original form is that of a blade, and I have heard tales of your bestowal of power upon numerous heroes throughout different eras. I served as a priestess, acting as an intermediary to express the divine will. It is worth noting that, in order to facilitate your interaction with others, I was obliged to lend you my own body. Our family proudly upheld this responsibility across generations, contributing to the collective triumph. However, I perceived a certain aloofness in you, preoccupied with enigmatic musings, which caused me concern. Until that fateful day arrived."**

Memories unfold, witnessed by the priestess and the Divine Sword alongside the hero Varhran. A betrayal so unimaginable that Quinn herself could not fathom it. The birth of Magsarion!... The anguish and emotions of His Majesty Sirius. The chronicle of their marital union, replete with sadness, joys, and tribulations, intertwining the destinies of two pawns of fate.

These revelations render the choice made by the hero and the Divine Sword unforgivable. Fragmented recollections from the past converge, unveiling the concealed truth regarding the sacred realm.

"Quinn... What have you done, sir?" Ashozushta regards me with evident disdain, and I too long to forget the shame and share her righteous anger, to the extent of dispatching my former self with a single strike.

"Nevertheless, I beseech you not to sympathize with me. For I was content."

Yet Quinn persists, her smile tender as she recounts the happiness she discovered in the face of being trampled upon.

**“My husband often remarked that we were mere appendages. He, referring to Sir Varhran, and I, naturally, to Lady Ahura Mazda... Hence, whenever he spoke of inevitability, a flicker of worry crossed his countenance. I initially believed it to be his peculiar form of jest, yet his serious tone rendered it oddly amusing... He could not express his concern in any other manner, and thus, I loved him more than anything in the world. My pride lay in being Sirius’ wife and yearning to bear his child. Even if it culminated in this manner, I found solace in the everyday existence of loving him. In this, I harbor no pity or remorse. Because...”**

After a moment's hesitation, she delves into the primary reason behind her recorded testimony.

**“— I believe I comprehend my husband's temperament. I surmise he is now immersed in an unfathomable abyss of darkness. I can even speculate as to why.”**

"The reason?..."

“How many more secrets will she unveil?"

I can empathize with Fer's stunned silence. His Majesty's life, quite literally, comprises a succession of losses, and an ordinary person in his position would have long succumbed to hopeless despair. Even now, he appears more wounded than any preconceived notions could have predicted. I could not have fathomed the existence of a more impenetrable darkness, and broaching such a subject would undoubtedly thrust us into imminent peril.

Yet, retreat is not an option. I have already made my decision, and thus, I eagerly await Quinn's continuation.

**“It seemed as though my husband perpetually wrestled with something. It was not an unattainable ideal as much as an unforgivable sin, from which he sought refuge... He averted his gaze, refusing to confront it, and desperately constructed walls around his heart. Perhaps his sole outlet was the artifice of appearances. As his wife, I concede that I was obligated to broach this topic... Or perhaps I too feared it. To discover that my husband's heart was never truly directed towards me from the very start would bring sorrow.”**

"So His Majesty loved someone else?"

But then, who? I understand that dialogue is impossible, yet I cannot refrain from vocalizing my query. For I cannot accept that His Majesty loved anyone other than this Quinn. Otherwise, her

loss would not have shattered him so profoundly. Thus, if there was an extraneous love, it was an equivalent of a curse.

What manner of "erroneous" attraction, what sin, could he not face until he resorted to artifice and constructed his walls?

Indeed... No, but... A certain name incessantly flits through my mind. If someone could be considered a curse, no other individual comes to mind...

**"Lady Nahid... I suppose His Majesty shares the same sentiment."**

Yet, even she is merely a means to an end. Quinn indirectly verifies my supposition, yet she immediately steers the conversation in an utterly unforeseen direction.

**"What I am about to disclose may prove somewhat perplexing. How could I have envisioned that I would encounter you once more, bereft of your memories? Because all of this directly concerns you as well."**

With those words, she unveils a truth so heartless and merciless that forgiveness becomes an impossibility for anyone.



In her younger years, his sister possessed an ethereal quality, akin to a wisp of air. Always gazing skyward with distant eyes, she rarely moved or spoke, her presence barely felt. This detachment often led her astray, teetering on the edge of accidents, yet she continued to flutter about, as if untethered from this world.

Despite being surrounded by many within their noble family, she remained secluded within her own realm. And so, he yearned to reach her.

To him, his sister appeared solitary, and it was only natural for him to seek a connection with a member of his own kin. Thus began their daily routine, as he took her hand and guided her through life's motions. They walked along bustling streets and frolicked in playgrounds outside the city, and at times, he even brought her along to his training sessions, much to the chagrin of his instructors.

She stood there, her countenance indifferent, but the young man's resolve remained unyielding. For his honor as an older brother was at stake, and he held himself in high regard.

"How can I become a hero who saves the world if I can't even bring a smile to my sister's face?"

Naive and green, he showered her with uncomplicated love, unembellished. Although it yielded no immediate results, he steadfastly persevered— partly due to his renowned conceit, and partly, perhaps, out of inherent kindness. Even if she were not his sister, he simply could not abandon a lonely soul.

He yearned to see her laugh.

To hear her call him by his first name.

He yearned to build a bond where they could discover together the nobility and beauty of the world, share experiences, and live a life intertwined.

That was all he desired for her.

Nothing grandiose, simply to bring her happiness within the bounds of reason.

For he believed that every "legend" was built upon these small, everyday joys. Little did he know that his judgment would soon falter.

His sister's transformation did not stem from their everyday interactions. Instead, it happened suddenly, brilliantly, like a scene from the heroic tales he so eagerly dreamed of.

In the spring of his fourteenth year, he suffered a resounding defeat in a tournament. And as if awakening from a radiance spawned in that very moment, his perpetually closed-off sister underwent a profound metamorphosis.

A smile of unparalleled charm graced her lips, and her voice, pure and untouched, resonated to the depths of everyone's being. Thunderous applause and exclamations erupted around her, rippling through the arena. It was a blessing, a miracle that guided him towards his place.

He was not the "original" nor the "legend," but merely one among the many destined to walk alongside the main character. Acceptance washed over him, devoid of any resentment or sorrow. In fact, he felt as if he had been saved.

Ah, had he continued along that path, unaware of his own mediocrity...

Surely, his desire to help his sister would have morphed into misguided love. He owed gratitude to his friend, and forgiveness to his sister.

To my dear friend, I extend my gratitude. Please forgive me, my sister. As long as you continue to tread the immaculate path of the "legend," I shall refrain from any further missteps. I have come to realize my rightful place, and from now on, I shall devote myself solely to extolling the journey of the protagonist. Hence, I beseech you, remain together until the end of time. You embody the essence of a perfect saga, destined to be an unwavering pair. For if one of you were to depart, my foolishness might lead me astray once more. It is this... This fear, more potent than anything else in the world, that seizes me. It marks the end of my youth, forever etched in my memory, as I shed tears of both joy and trepidation. It heralds the commencement of an unearthly and dazzling inferno, wherein I become entranced by the allure of "legends".

"I... don't ask you to forgive me, Nahid. But now that Varhran is gone, I can't stay by your side."

Gazing at his sister, frozen in time, Sirius spoke to her with a somber tone. Now, he understood the tremors that seized him when he sealed their fate.

He had yearned to cast aside all shame, to confront the vulgar, base, and bestial thoughts that had ensnared him. And in realizing them, he had pledged her to Kaikhosru, like a mere pawn.

"Even if I could have chosen to abuse you personally, would such a sin be worse than surrendering you as the serpent's concubine? I cannot be certain, but for now, I leave it to chance. The answer will reveal itself after the treaty signing ceremony..."

Sirius paused, his words unfinished, as he gazed out the window. The once-vibrant place where the notorious child had honed his sword skills now stood empty, yet he knew of the turmoil the swordsman wreaked upon the world.

Would he succumb, or would he devour his transgressors?

Both outcomes held equal weight in Sirius' eyes, for in the end, the entire world would be tainted with insignificance.

Until the true "legend" returned...

"I only pray that when I vanish ungracefully, you will reunite with the 'original,' my sister."



Meanwhile... In a distant land, Magsarion, instead in front of the silent starry princess, bared his teeth. Like Nahid, he remained immobile, yet his relentless and cold-blooded train of thought ceaselessly sought an answer.

Perhaps, at the cost of his left hand, he had forged an indirect connection with Kaikhosru.

He observed.

He understood.

‘Just a little longer...’

The furious warrior reached a point where he was ready to dissect, understanding the underlying loss that birthed the dragon.

### 3

The prevailing essence of the day could be encapsulated in a single word: heat.

It was an atmosphere saturated with palpable fervor, a fusion of emotions ranging from anticipation and anxiety to joy and fear. Yet, despite this amalgamation of sentiments, an air of solemnity and tranquility permeated the surroundings, showing no signs of escalating into a frenzy.

The sight of the multitude of people and swaying grass covering the ground, united with hearts brimming with excitement, presented a peculiar and almost otherworldly scene. Indeed, this place defied conventional wisdom. It was a simple notion, but the only thing that revealed a definite abnormality.

The gathering was a fusion of two factions, with no distinct separation between them. They recalled a past in which their neighbors were once irreconcilable enemies, but now they accepted each other's presence. It was evident, albeit not entirely natural, that they had set aside their grudges, as evidenced by the absence of those subdued by the stationed soldiers at key points—soldiers who themselves represented a mix of black and white.

In other words, a stronger force governed this place. To be more precise, everyone was so fixated on one major interest that little else mattered.

The signing ceremony, which showcased the alliance between the Sacred Realm and the Dragon Husk Star to the entire world, was the catalyst for a new era that everyone sensed on the horizon.

The key figures from both planets stood together on the newly formed continent of Arzshenk. The people, their allies, and the two kings were all present, a momentous gathering. Naturally, the local infrastructure struggled to accommodate such a significant workforce. After all, they had only been given three months to prepare. The conditions were far from ideal for hosting a sophisticated event like those in the past.

Thus, Alma, entrusted with managing the site and organizing the ceremony, implemented a policy to minimize confusion. While the vast plains surrounding them were designated as the central area, little was done aside from clearing and leveling the land. Instead, they focused on improving the accommodation facilities along the roads leading to the site. This unconventional approach prioritized the appearance of the "venue" and, contrary to expectations, proved to be a rational choice. They were able to welcome a large number of people, and the site was far from being a barren landscape.

The venue for the signing ceremony, now teeming with millions of people, featured a colossal rocky hill at its center. Originally a pile of rocks, it had been transformed into a fortress-like structure. Its exterior was unassuming yet robust, fitting for a historic declaration. At its peak stood an open observation platform, with a keep nearby. Sirius and Kaikhosru occupied the latter, while their entourages were scattered among the former.

Although the people of the lower world had yet to lay eyes on them, the ceremony was about to commence. They all understood that once it began, there would be no turning back. If the act of denial were to become a fait accompli in such an explicit form, there could be no doubt that various common sense would collapse in a chain reaction. It can be the definition of good and evil, the standard of emotions or the value of life and death...

Everything will change. It will be repainted. Sirius or Kaikhosru, the only permanent thing they have, will be reincarnated in the new universe. At least it's clear that there's going to be a battle for it. Decisive battle with the Gods Who Ruled Old Age—Therefore, perhaps it would be more correct to call this a declaration of war.

Amidst such circumstances, Roxanne approached Alma.

"Hello there, are you feeling nervous?" she inquired, her voice carrying the same leisurely tone as before.

No one else was present— a stark symbol of Alma's intricate position. Just when she believed she had found the perfect spot to focus, she was interrupted. Naturally, this irked her, prompting Alma to respond with an audible sigh and a dismissive comment.

"How tedious. If you're looking for someone to play with, find someone else."

Roxanne chuckled and retorted, "Oh, come on now. Is this your draft?"

She took hold of Alma's previously vocalized speech and proceeded to read it aloud before casually tearing it apart.

"I think we can make it more entertaining and light-hearted, I'm not reporting on military affairs, after all. The disadvantage of Alma-chan is that she reads too much. No matter how big your responsibility, you mustn't say what you don't want to."

"Enough," Alma snapped, her tone laden with frustration.

"Don't impose your own carefree standards."

While Alma responded with a dejected expression, she was aware that the content of her speech seemed somewhat off. Roxanne, too, likely recognized the reason behind this discrepancy. Alma could be a bit scatterbrained. Despite her sense of responsibility, she disliked uttering words she didn't truly mean. In other words, Alma herself harbored uncertainties and hesitations about the signing ceremony. While she understood the event's importance in shaping the future, she wasn't in the mood for the grandiose phrase "child of the new era" that had appeared in the initial draft.

"I don't know what I don't know, and I don't like what I don't like," she mused.

Doubts and fears persisted, leaving everything in disarray and uncertainty. She had considered that, as a member of a political faction, she shouldn't reveal her vulnerability. However, she couldn't bring herself to utter something so beautiful that she herself couldn't believe in it.

"At least," Alma thought, "I gave up and confided in Roxanne, continuing the conversation we had cut short earlier."

Roxanne had mentioned having some understanding of the world Kaikhosru aspired to create. Nevertheless, there were still aspects that puzzled her, and she sought Alma's perspective.

"I'm not seeking a definite answer, but I'd like to know what you think," Roxanne cheerfully prompted, urging Alma to recount the events that had transpired earlier— the exchange between Kaikhosru and Magsarion, the Dragon Husk Star king's perception of the world, and his intentions for change.

Regardless of the merits and drawbacks of the idea, Alma believed she had a grasp of the ultimate goal. However, her discomfort with the process prevented her from fully understanding Kaikhosru's noble path. Alma glanced at the keep momentarily before returning her gaze to Roxanne.

"That guy despises the concept of equivalent exchange, doesn't he? Childishly, he wants to acquire everything without giving up anything in return. But the precepts are entirely built on the foundation of equivalent exchange, aren't they? It's a contradiction," Alma expressed her thoughts, her tone filled with a mixture of frustration and confusion.

Roxanne offered her perspective, "Perhaps it's the karma from a past life. Even if he rejects the precepts, they remain strong because of the consequences of breaking them, don't you think?"

"I get that part. What I don't understand is why he doesn't choose to break the **Commandments** again."

Alma was trying to convey that Kaikhosru's approach seemed indirect and convoluted. The grandiose precepts of the past were laws established by the previous Dragon God, not ones he formulated himself. It was unsatisfying that those precepts still persisted even after his fall, and Alma could comprehend Kaikhosru's aversion to equivalent exchange.

However, if that were the case, why did he continue adhering to those laws?

"Why not simply disregard them? The binding obligations were originally self-imposed. Even if they break the laws again, this time they should confront the consequences head-on. Of course, I'm not suggesting it would be easy."

"Well, in a way, it might be quicker that way, don't you think? It's like a bare-knuckle brawl, and it's a display of bravery."

“He denied being a soldier, but I've seen him go on a rampage when he felt like it. I don't understand why he can be so wise when it comes to the **Commandments** and yet act like a fool.”

Alma wanted to believe that Kaikhosru was not a coward.

“The most important thing was to be true to oneself and embrace one's feelings fully. In reality, it wasn't about whether one could attain the best outcome.”

"Wait, I don't understand. What does that mean?"

"The first time he saw me, he was so excited," Roxanne reminisced.

"About seventy years ago, I ended things with Kaikhosru. I told him that we had reached an impasse, that it wasn't enjoyable anymore, and that we should break up. I initiated the separation, and I remember how unhappy he looked.”

"Because he was always behind?" Alma questioned.

"Yes, especially when it comes to important matters. Consider it.”

‘I was right. From what I know, Kaikhosru's choices have always been reactive.

Alma recounted the significant events where Kaikhosru's actions were shaped by external circumstances— the alliance with Sirius, the abandonment of Arzshenk due to a violent attack, Nadare collapsing the world when they attempted a genuine alliance, and the recent incident involving Magsarion.

The reason he had to hand over one of his arms was because Alma was almost killed, wasn't it?

Alma realized that Kaikhosru's decisions often came after the fact, leaving him at a disadvantage.

"If this is the case, his feelings when he was dumped by Roxanne can't simply be attributed to lost love. The reason for proposing such a pact was rooted in anger towards himself for making her utter those words," Alma surmised.

"So, in short, he wants to defy fate?"

“In theory, yes. He believes that one must naturally attract the future they desire.”

It wasn't about accepting or challenging the law of equivalent exchange or the Commandments. The issue lay in the fact that they were presented with a situation that forced them to choose between the two— an unacceptable predicament in Kaikhosru's eyes.

It was displeasing to follow the precepts and receive something in return, but direct confrontation with them ensued if they were not accepted. At first glance, the latter option seemed like the path of hegemony, but Kaikhosru believed that to be a judgment of ordinary individuals.

"He said, 'Maybe you don't like the idea of being one of two things.' I didn't give it much thought at the time."

"So that's how Kaikhosru exposed your weakness. I can't do much to help, but I believe you can overcome it. That sounds... logical," Alma offered her support.

"No, Alma, he won't. He'll only use gentle things like vessels as weapons to defy fate,"

'I'm not a capable person. Defenseless, without a plan, unaware of the enemy's weaknesses,' Alma admitted.

Kaikhosru took for granted that the Divine Throne would only be attained when it was willingly offered from the other side. He aimed to obtain everything without surrendering anything, refusing to even consider the alternative within his dominion. He believed, without justification, that he could achieve it. Despite numerous failures and setbacks, he never wavered in his pride as the vessel of the Divine Throne, questioning why he couldn't accomplish it.

Roxanne, speaking softly to Alma, who contemplated his words and deeds in silence, remarked, "That's why I can't do it. I already left him once, and I'm not the right person for him."

The Dragon Jewel Princess's words felt like a declaration of defeat.

"It will be you who truly crowns Kaikhosru as the king, Alma. He won't give up anything to win your heart. When that happens, the world will change," Roxanne prophesied.

"In that case, should I proceed in that direction?" Alma pondered. "I see. I'm starting to understand," Alma responded, a glimmer of comprehension in her eyes."

As Alma looked up, a smile crept onto her face, Roxanne's heart was pounding

in her chest. It was a smile that seemed to mock her own growing attraction to Kaikhosru, but at the same time, it conveyed a fierce determination. The enigmatic aura surrounding her, which left even the astute Roxanne perplexed, made her heart race.

"I don't quite comprehend, but there's something else he truly desires, isn't there? Something he lost in the beginning and hasn't been able to reclaim. Do you know about it...?"

"Of course I do. I am still the favored princess. He's the only one unaware," Roxanne revealed.

The princesses were aware of a primordial piece missing from Kaikhosru's knowledge. Alma softly shared this revelation.

"... right?"

The truth faded away, carried by the winds, but it reached Roxanne's ears. Suddenly, understanding struck her.

"I'm surprised. You're truly ambitious," Roxanne remarked.

Alma's intentions became clear to Roxanne. What she desired, what she hoped to obtain. Although the exact details eluded Roxanne, she grasped the general direction.

"I know I said a few times before that we are very similar, but I take it back. We are very different."

"I don't know. I think we're pretty much the same. We're both stupid, and maybe we are the same at the core after all."

After exchanging evaluations that were neither complimentary nor sarcastic, the two women chuckled together. At the same time, the ceremonial band sounded, signaling the beginning of the ceremony.

Nonchalantly, Roxanne asked Alma, who had risen from her seat, "May I accompany you?"

"Do as you wish, but don't get carried away," Alma cautioned.

"I thought I could assist you since I know you have many tasks to attend to alone," Roxanne explained.

Whether it concerned the ceremony or another matter entirely, the answer lay solely within the hearts of the two women, concealed from all others.

Amidst the tranquil heat and palpable tension, the two stepped onto the stage side by side.

Both were tenacious, yet capable of transcending the boundaries that separated them. If the celebration marked the end of the old world and the dawn of a new era, then surely they were the perfect combination.



From the lofty heights of their keep, the two kings observed Alma and Roxanne as they began their speeches. One king wore an amused expression, while the other maintained a stern countenance. Despite their contrasting demeanors, both kings shared a common trait: their silence. It was a silence that spoke volumes, carrying an air of anticipation and tension.

"Regardless of gender, race, or any other classification, every one of us harbors deep-seated conflicts," Alma began, her voice resonating with conviction. "I, for one, do not believe in convenient reconciliations. We mustn't forget why we are here or who stands beside us. Take a closer look, and don't shy away from discomfort."

"I'm not suggesting that you engage in violence against one another. If that's your choice, I cannot stop you. But I implore you to contemplate the underlying causes within your own minds," Roxanne added, her words commanding attention.

"Whether you fight, unite, or choose to ignore, it is a decision that rests with each of you."

"Do not dance like puppets at the mercy of some divine puppeteer. Each of you must possess a steadfast will."

"The realm of true freedom lies in forging a new world unlike any other,

Their voices, like ethereal echoes, reached the farthest corners of the planets by power of the Stars Spirit. Engaging in such celestial communication required immense concentration, but Sirius and Kaikhosru's silence stemmed not from such trivial matters.

"We have been bound as blood brothers for countless years. We believed that by annihilating one another, all would be set right. Blind faith was our only guide, for nothing else showed us an alternative path," Alma confessed.

"What is 'it'? Is it nature, instinct, or perhaps God? Can you truly explain it with certainty when you struggle to grasp its essence?" Roxanne questioned, her voice filled with a sense of profound curiosity.



"Living a life of blind adherence is dull, wouldn't you agree? Let us open our eyes and implore you to do the same," Alma passionately urged.

From their elevated vantage point, it was evident that the crowd had fallen into a state of bewildered confusion. The delicate balance teetered on the edge, yet the atmosphere remained eerily calm. The outcome of this delicate situation hung precariously, impossible to predict with even the slightest hint of certainty. This was the reason behind Sirius and Kaikhosru's silence. The women standing before them, their confidants, practically challenged the kings' authority. They urged the people to question the laws that governed them, to break free from the shackles of blind obedience, and to embrace skepticism

towards the new laws that would replace the old. Blindly following orders would only lead to repeating past mistakes. They implored the masses to awaken from their slumber.

Unable to withstand this last-minute rebellion any longer, Kaikhosru burst into laughter.

"Oh, I'm in quite a predicament," he chuckled, his voice tinged with both amusement and unease.

"We're all in trouble."

Initially, their laws were not lukewarm to the point that it wavered due to the inappropriate nature of things. Despite this, the fact that there is confusion among the people proves that agitators are special. Alma and Roxana have a certain resistance to existing laws due to the fact that they can switch between white and black. In addition, it was embarrassing that the heart that awaited the new king was not false.

Ignoring the chaos that threatened to ensue, Kaikhosru continued, "I don't care. Let's paint over it all, free from the constraints of popular opinion."

"I see, I see," Sirius responded, his voice tinged with weariness. "But, Kaikhosru, isn't it unlike you to merely clean up the aftermath? That's not your style."

"No, my friend, this is a testament to a man's worthiness," Kaikhosru declared.

"Loyal vassals are those who make harsh remarks. In other words, they want us to show them men."

"She's not a cheap girl? She's stupid."

"Oh, she's stupid."

"If you ask me to make you fall in love with me, I will make you fall in love with me. Anyway, that was my intention."

With a burst of golden energy, emanating from the depths of the Demon King's being, a vividly colored dragon materialized in the sky above Arzshenk. It was not a manifestation of punishment, but rather a prayer for a future where everyone could confront the challenges that lay ahead with clarity and resolve.

"For in the end, a great cycle shall come to pass," Alma affirmed.

"Indeed, I am certain of it," added Roxanne.

"No matter the hardships that lie on the path before us."

With their speeches concluded, the kings embarked on their respective journeys. Though there may have been misunderstandings along the way, the core message remained unchanged.

"I shall forge ahead, one step ahead of you, Sirius. And deep down, you know it too."

With those words, he perched upon the parapet of the keep, leaping off with a single bound. In mid-air, like a graceful dancer, he activated instantaneous movement. Rather than shifting himself, Kaikhosru beckoned something from afar to his side. A tingling sensation surged through his left arm, while his countenance distorted into a ferocious, black fury that seemed to devour him from within.

"I felt a kinship, knowing there were others fighting against the notion of equivalent exchange. If that's the case, then you alone are worthy of being my opponent here!" Kaikhosru declared with an unwavering resolve.

"I have no taste for half-heartedness. Go forth and settle this," Sirius replied, shaking his head as if overwhelmed. "You seek to display your radiant manhood, hoping to be chosen by her."

"I shall vanquish each and every one of them, melting their souls and captivating even the Gods themselves to take their place," Kaikhosru proclaimed, consumed by a rapturous blend of desire and greed.

With a grandiose and theatrical flourish, Kaikhosru made his decisive move. His actions were not driven by retribution but by a prayer for a future where he and others could confront their destinies

head-on. As the words echoed in the air, the kings set their plans in motion. Though there may have been misinterpretations along the way, their fundamental purpose remained unaltered.

On this day, on this occasion, you were born to be the catalyst that propelled me to great heights, Magsarion!”



“And...”

Quinn's voice trailed off, her words laden with the weight of her story's conclusion. She implored, her voice filled with a desperate plea, “**Please, help dispel the darkness that has burdened my husband**”.

As the last remnants of Quinn's tale hung in the air, a profound realization washed over us. Though their individual experiences and the identity of their foe may have differed, they shared an unwavering resolve. It was a resolute determination never to surrender, to persist in the face of adversity. In unison, we pledged to return to the destined coordinates that beckoned them.

Within the blink of an eye, the ethereal sanctuary of the Divine Sword materialized in the skies of Arzshenk.

4

"Nuh--" he exclaimed, his reflexes kicking in before conscious thought could catch up.

Perhaps it was more of a hunch, a deep intuition guiding his actions. Sirius transformed into his Star Spirit form, his body shimmering, as he summoned the spiritual power of his radiant wings to push back the colossal castle floating in the sky.

"Do not allow that entity to draw near. Anything from that realm brings only devastation," he whispered, his intuition transcending rationality.

Every ounce of his focus was concentrated on a single thought of rejection, channeling the forsaken power of authority within him. The result was a violent reaction, shattering the castle into fragments, though he never witnessed the destruction. His fingernails torn and blood streaming from his ears, he paid no heed to his injuries.

"It's futile, utterly futile. I would sooner self-destruct myself here than face the horrors that send shivers down my spine. The fear and revulsion consume me, erasing any trace of my former resolve," he confessed, his intense emotions fueled by the interconnected events unfolding before him.

Sirius was anything but ordinary. Madness lurked within him, ready to seize control at a moment's notice. This mental state imprisoned his freedom, rendering him incapable of involvement in other affairs.

At the same time, there was a clash between the dragon and the evil warrior.

""Ltd!""

Meanwhile, a clash of titans unfolded between the dragon and the furious warrior, their thunderous roars echoing across the new continent. Kaikhosru still struggled to break free from Magsarion's petrifying grasp and his own transformation showing no signs of abating. Yet, he pressed on.

Infusing his sword with a ferocious killing intent, Kaikhosru engaged in a daring swordfight, defying the natural order. The phenomenon epitomized the rivalry between the two adversaries, tension crackling in the air. Kaikhosru paid no mind to rationality, ignoring Magsarion's conventional wisdom. Undoubtedly, this act twisted the fabric of Kaikhosru's authority, but it did not shatter it entirely.

While Magsarion retained his combat capabilities, his essence had been reduced to little more than a statue. His unyielding form remained immutable, devoid of restoration. The connection between their left arms held the key to their entangled destinies, allowing interference with each other's attributes. It was a precarious balance akin to facing off with a double-edged sword.

Consequently, Magsarion, fighting with only his right arm, found himself at a slight disadvantage. Despite the exchange being equitable, his left arm had been "stolen," subjectively speaking.

With a snort of disdain, Kaikhosru unleashed an assault of spiritual force, sending Magsarion hurtling backward.

The battle played out atop the dragon's body, adding to the black knight's disadvantage. Countless onlookers, from the awe-struck spectators gazing at the sky to Alma, Roxanne, the favored princesses, and the nobles of the Sacred Realm, all bore witness to the men's clash. Even Quinn and her group, still held at bay by Sirius's resistance, watched the unfolding events with bated breath.

Nadare, Aka Manah, and even the **Truth** itself...

Everyone yearned for this decisive moment, fervently hoping it would bring an end.

Would the laws that governed the universe persist or crumble?

And if the latter, what would the new reality hold?

Countless thoughts, desires, and expectations converged within the hearts of those embroiled in the center of it all. Kaikhosru's proud smile radiated boundless pleasure, his eagerness overflowing.

"I shall show the entire world that I am the champion. This is a magnificent sight, a grand stage. For a man, there is no greater thrill than this game. You, solely proficient at the art of killing, must be in high spirits now, yes?"

Magsarion's response to this warm invitation was tinged with a heavy, somber self-mockery.

"As I've told the others, I do not relish fighting," he confessed, his sigh resonating through the dark, bottomless abyss. "True, I excel only in the art of killing, but it is not a hobby of mine. If there is someone who can better bring about the destruction of this world, I shall yield the stage to them."

"Ah, so it's a surrender?"

"No.

Magsarion replied, shaking his head slowly before erupting in sudden intensity.

"No, there is a void within your vessel. And I shall reveal it to you. I will carve you open and expose it myself."

"Intriguing."

The scales of the vividly colored dragon burst into radiant light, each scale holding the power to turn a star into a gemstone. From all directions, the command of the serpentine dragons descended

upon Magsarion, resembling a laser weapon. The waves of light, akin to a massive lens concentrating sunlight to incinerate the smallest of insects, exuded the aura of an indomitable champion, their brilliance far from despair-inducing.

Escape was futile. The density of the assault made it inescapable, regardless of the neutral ground on the new continent. Moreover, the attack moved at the speed of light, a devastating torrent impossible to evade.

Who could have fathomed that every single strike would be parried?

Black sword flashes scattered in all directions, reducing the dragon's grandeur to mere dust. It was a divine feat, absurdly accomplished as if it were second nature to Magsarion. And Kaikhosru, undeterred, exhibited no signs of intimidation.

"Excellent, you've done well, and I commend you."

With a menacing left fist, he struck Magsarion's face, mirroring their previous encounter. A tickling black shadow danced in and out of existence. Without pause, the dragon scales ignited once more. Magsarion deflected the oncoming petrifying light with swift slashes, emphasizing the danger of underestimating the authority's power.

It was a remarkably skillful technique to counteract it, but one that required perpetual vigilance. As long as the battle raged on the dragon's body, the flow of light remained uninterrupted, perpetually illuminating the black swordsman until the battle's resolution.

Therefore, with this setup, Kaikhosru's dominance seemed almost inevitable. If he chose caution, he could simply observe his opponent until their power waned, and if he chose to be serious, he could deliver decisive strikes at critical moments. However, the Dragon King did not adhere to such conventional wisdom.

"Now we stand at the very heart of the world," he proclaimed, taking a bold step forward and slashing with relentless force.



He attacked with a fierce momentum, disregarding the risk of lingering within Magsarion's lethal reach, resembling a tempest of steel. Sparks ignited as the blades clashed, the gleam of authority growing even more radiant. Kaikhosru abandoned the logical strategy of battle and threw himself into a swordfight, refusing to retreat even a step. There was no intention to overpower Magsarion and invoke the precepts as he had done before. In fact, he believed that if that were to happen, he would be the one to lose.

Laughingly, he chose to tread the treacherous and absurd path, seeking to gain everything without relinquishing anything. Furthermore, he aimed to complete the ultimate lethal sword, capable of slaying all. He desired to conquer, consume, and subdue this man whose prowess in killing mirrored that of a cancer cell. The king possessed the ability to accommodate any kind of poison, no matter how reckless or hazardous it might be. He held significance precisely because he was capable of achieving unprecedented feats, ones that had never been accomplished in the past and

would remain unparalleled in the future, as if it were his very nature. This was a dance enchanting all things within the world. It was the grandest of festivals, designed to seduce the Gods, make them fall madly in love, and relinquish their Divine Thrones. The performance had to reach the pinnacle of excitement, and it could not be achieved through clever or cautious means.

That was why Kaikhosru fought with such ferocity. He engaged Magsarion, playing directly into his strengths. One could even say he was being drawn in, yet he welcomed it without reservation. To captivate the audience, they needed to be attuned to their own breath.

Fluid and fierce.

Gruesome and spectacular.

If they wished to proclaim who the greatest man in the world was, a beautiful dance was necessary, one infused with the extremities of bloodshed.

"So, come forth and show me," Kaikhosru challenged. "If there is a void in my vessel, or if it can even be called a void. Crush it, and I shall become whole. Fulfill your duty, Magsarion!"

The black knight, crouching and evading the slashing flashes, twirled behind like a spinning top, slicing through the persistently emanating light of authority. Fearless, he disregarded the imminent danger.

"Stupid!"

It dawned on the dragon that the cutting wind released by Magsarion was aimed at the people regrouping on the land. Kaikhosru dispelled them with a single glance. Was this a ploy to force him to pay the price and admit defeat? Or was it a tactic to seize an advantage from this opening? Regardless, it was futile. Kaikhosru possessed the confidence to claim the heavens.

"I will not allow anyone to take what is rightfully mine.

The two combatants embodied both good and evil, right and wrong. They defied existing concepts, and this exchange rendered those concepts meaningless. Yet, they were two men who defied the confines of the established framework, a fitting development that foretold the future of the world.

Magsarion took flight, launching a series of six strikes towards the people. Kaikhosru intercepted four of them, ensuring their safety, while the remaining two struck directly into the crowd.



However, even those who should have been cleaved into pieces by the ferocious strikes began to regenerate, a sight that made even the most brutal murders appear less significant.

The path that Kaikhosru had embarked upon, the hegemony he dedicated himself to, was beginning to take shape. It was a world that acknowledged all desires while ensuring that nothing was lost. A world where people found satisfaction even as they competed against each other.

"As I suspected, under your ideal, death will vanish."

"What of it?"

Feeling his dream on the verge of fulfillment, he closed the distance between them, chanting with exuberance. The winds of the impending deadly sword drew near his neck, but Kaikhosru remained undeterred.

"Neither defense nor evasion can stand against the path of a king. And if I, too, remain unyielding, I shall advance without falter."

As a result, he repelled the attack with sheer strength, not allowing even a thin layer of his skin to be cut. Conversely, Magsarion was impaled through his breastplate, suggesting that the game was reaching its conclusion.

"I must admit, you are difficult to kill."

Magsarion, who should have been gravely wounded to the naked eye, maintained a calm and resolute demeanor. The most crucial thing to acknowledge was that the best way to make the most of one's resources was to ensure their optimal utilization. Magsarion simultaneously directed his gears of thought toward analyzing Kaikhosru. The black knight encroached upon the domain of the accursed, the lost origins of the Dragon God.

"You were never truly alive to begin with," Magsarion declared.

Indeed, a heartbeat— proof of a pulsating life— was nonexistent in Kaikhosru.

**My initial impression of him was abysmal. I intended to end his life, but he returned my smile, causing my blade to falter. Naturally, I was dumbfounded. Then anger consumed me, determined not to let him off the hook.**

Yet, in the next moment, an unsettling feeling washed over me.'

"I am not asking you to pledge allegiance to me. If you wish to kill me, do so, Alma."

The king spoke to the woman he loved. He even offered his life for hers, a statement both heroic and uncommon. It was not unusual for a man to utter such hollow words while wooing a woman. However, it was not something to be said lightly or under the influence of alcohol. Indeed, it was later proven that he meant every word.

**Nevertheless, I sensed an odd 'lightness' about him.**

Undoubtedly, he aspires to transcend the boundaries of right and wrong, but for some reason, there is little indication that he is willing to risk his life.

Was it due to inherent arrogance? No, that was not the case. So, what was it?

As Alma found herself enveloped in his majestic embrace, she suddenly realized.

**Ah, he does not comprehend the essence of life. Therefore, he does not understand how to cling to it.**

The will for supremacy becomes bloodthirsty. The path of righteousness, too, becomes saturated with blood and passion, yet the heart remains chillingly cold. Perhaps, from the very beginning, this was his nature.

He indulges in fine wine, relishes gourmet food, embraces women, and surrenders to his desires because it is an imitation of life. The lifeless Kaikhosru attempts to fill the void within himself through excess. He treats Alma with such intensity because he expects her, the woman who came to claim a life that does not exist, to stir his heart to kill him.

**"Though all of this is unconscious, Kaikhosru recognizes the void within him. However, he prioritizes immediate gratification over discovering its true nature. It is a reversal of**

**thought— to acquire first and then learn about loss through what one gains. But the reason he developed such thinking also stems from the absence of a beginning. Lacking the fundamental essence of life, he regresses in his logical steps. I believe his cursed nature, which becomes more pronounced at the most critical moments, may be a consequence of this.**

**At any rate, he is an extraordinary, troublesome, and melancholic man. In a universe where killing one another is the norm, his lifeless existence must be the epitome of profound loneliness. It is bitterly ironic that the embodiment of greed is, in fact, the poorest of the poor.”**

The exact circumstances leading to Kaikhosru becoming what he is remain unknown. However, Alma could formulate a hypothesis.

**“Perhaps he was a child who defied his due date, failing to be born even after several days had passed. While it is normal for a baby to be born a few days late, there are rare cases where delivery is delayed for years. In such instances, the baby is almost certainly stillborn. However, that does not dissuade the mother from holding on.**

**Therefore, here lies the precept of the Dragon God: 'In accordance with the rule that happiness can be attained through the torment of sacrifice, Kaikhosru's mother must have prayed for her child's safety.' For the sake of her child's well-being. For a successful birth. The reward, of course, would only be a feeling, but it would have sufficed.”**

She found herself liberated from the clutches of anxiety and sadness, basking in an unparalleled euphoria. It was a widely acknowledged truth that a mother's emotional state could profoundly impact the developing fetus, and in this case, the outcome was nothing short of miraculous.

The infant emerged into the world, neither dead nor alive, in a strange form that defied the boundaries of normalcy.

“This is merely a conjecture,” Alma mused, acknowledging the lack of concrete evidence and the impossibility of certainty. “Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the baby was never destined for a normal existence from the very beginning.”

But such details were inconsequential. What mattered to Alma was the primal void that Kaikhosru yearned to fill— an insatiable hunger for life. To him, the ultimate culmination lay in a world stripped of death, where desires would run rampant, unhindered by any constraints.

It was a world that would undoubtedly be abnormal, distorted, and could aptly be described as a manifestation of hell.

‘But can we truly claim it to be worse than this?’ Alma contemplated, her thoughts tinged with a somber introspection.

‘If, at the very least, the chains of the past are vanishing, I would prefer to be enveloped in the same mire of suffering, indulging in my own unsightly greed. For within me lies an unwavering attachment, an attachment that refuses to relinquish its hold.’

‘Because there is someone who yearns for my continued existence,’ she whispered softly, as though confessing a profound secret.

‘I cannot fathom... I cannot fathom the thought of my prayers inadvertently becoming the cause of another's demise.’

A subtle trepidation filled her, a fear of envisioning the repercussions should they reject her. Regardless of his words, the fear of experiencing heartache and sorrow from a cold response lingered within her, causing her to hesitate, unwilling to bear the pain.

‘I felt so ashamed of my own timidity that I turned my gaze away, murmuring, 'Please, proceed.'”

Alma recounted; a tinge of vulnerability evident in her voice. With a gentle nod, he gently pushed her back.

‘Do not worry,’ he reassured her, his words carrying an unwavering conviction.

‘No one would ever dare to reject you, Alma-chan.’

The sheer assurance he bestowed upon her, unfounded by any tangible evidence, infused her with courage surpassing even the wryest of smiles.

‘I understand...

Alma trailed off, her gaze now lifted towards the heavens, and with a newfound lightness that made her feel as though she possessed wings, she began to run.



"You possess no understanding of risking your own life, and that is precisely why you have never recognized a heart that ceases to beat."

Once again, Kaikhosru swung his mighty sword, but this time he narrowly evaded the strike. The dragon scale armor flickered intermittently, its power diminishing with each flicker. It was a telltale sign of exposure to daylight, causing a disturbance within him. In stark contrast, Magsarion's armor had already begun repairing the hole in his chest. Though concealed within the darkness, he made a series of cold and stern remarks, as if the matter was trivial.

"The most authentic experience of life lies on the precipice of life and death, you however, are structurally incapable of experiencing it, forced to indulge in futile extravagance. A fruitless struggle, indeed."

No matter how hard Kaikhosru tried, he was trapped in a spiraling void that prevented him from truly perceiving the value of his own life. The most effective moves were obstructed, leaving the lifeless devoid of the knowledge and recognition of their own still-beating hearts. His aversion to serving as a frontline soldier stemmed from his inherent inability to comprehend the act of killing one another. Even now, he refrained from using the word "fight" entirely.

He referred to it as a "dance" and a "play," believing himself to be on the grandest stage of his life, where the lifeless nature of existence had little awareness of the life-and-death struggle.

"If that's the case..." Kaikhosru muttered, his voice filled with contemplation, before unleashing an angry shout. "I shall claim your life!"

With this cry, he lunged forward, his curved sword slashing through Magsarion's torso. Yet, the strike was swiftly countered, repelled by a black slash. As they engaged in a rapid sword fight, the waning brilliance of Kaikhosru's authority began to rekindle.

"I concede that I was momentarily consumed by a sense of emptiness when my lack was exposed," Kaikhosru admitted. "But that is all there is to it."

His hunger took on a more tangible form, and his desire roared more fiercely. The situation remained largely unchanged. Magsarion's sword had grown sharper since its discovery, but he had no intention of receiving a single blow. The oath he had sworn to achieve victory still reverberated within him.

"A king remains a king, even without risking his life. The strong remain strong," Magsarion taunted, laughing at Kaikhosru as if watching a clichéd farce. "Will you take it? How? Another equivalent exchange?"

"I will no longer resort to such means!" Kaikhosru roared, his authority radiating from all directions.

He had no intention of offering anything; instead, he sought to seize the throne of God with his majesty.

"I won't allow you to create that situation. I am the vessel, and I shall claim it all!" he declared. In that moment, he proclaimed, "My sight is set upon that."

"Impossible."

Magsarion's sword ran vertically from below, slashing through Kaikhosru's left arm. Just as in the past, but with a deadly poison that was decidedly different from that time.

"I know the caliber of those who refuse to risk their lives. That is why you cannot escape the cycle of equivalent exchange," Magsarion asserted.

With a single resolve, he faced heaven and earth, for those who are determined to achieve their goals, their determination serves as the foundation for everything. Without preparation, one cannot even step into the ring, let alone compete on the same level and bring forth the desired circumstances.

Hence, the results elude them. It is often said that the Goddess does not smile, and indeed, she did not. Now, they hovered directly above the observation deck, their gaze fixated on a woman who stared down at the severed left arm.

"It seems some of you fell for it. I am grateful," she remarked.

I need not introduce the beautiful brown princess as she runs, leaps, and approaches the men.

“Alma!”, Kaikhosru reflexively moves into a descent to protect her.

Magsarion, on the other hand, said in a gentle tone, beckoning her towards him.

"You shall die for me."

"Yes."

What understanding existed between them?

They communicated seamlessly, their left arms moving in unison. The arm that once belonged to Kaikhosru but originally belonged to Magsarion returned to its rightful owner when he clasped Alma's hand.

As they passed each other, Kaikhosru comprehended the situation upon witnessing the smile she bestowed upon him. An equivalent exchange was imminent, and an irrevocable and unprecedented retribution was about to unfold.

In a daze, Kaikhosru fell backward, and Magsarion held Alma tightly in his regained left arm. The black knight, who normally engaged only with the intention to kill, now embraced and was embraced by his childhood friend without a care in the world. The first realization that struck him was that the left arm was not the only thing held by the black knight.



"Just a little more..." Alma murmured dreamily, pressing her forehead against the disfigured armor.

In this moment, her dream was on the verge of fulfillment.



"My emotions will kill you."

"I don't understand why, but even knowing that, my love for you persists uncontrollably. I cannot restrain it. Thus, it is you who must end my life, Magsarion."

She boldly declared that this moment had come precisely because she was willing to accept such an outcome. Love and the desire to kill were two sides of the same coin, firmly established between them. These conflicting emotions coexisted without contradiction.

"I do not wish for your death because I love you," Magsarion admitted. "And yet, I desire your demise precisely because I love you. If I wish to be embraced, desired, and cherished, I must cast aside all shame and become worthy of a furious blade. In truth, I take great pride in my shamelessness. After all, the years have changed, and you have been cursed for over twenty years."

Alma smiled and...

"I'll die for you, so thank you."

She then turned around swiftly, launching herself into the air. Her destination was Kaikhosru.

"Alma..." Kaikhosru uttered, falling backward, his gaze fixed on the woman hurtling straight towards his heart.

Her determination sent tremors through him.

"Yes, yes! What a woman! You! You! You truly are remarkable!"

Kaikhosru finally understood Alma's true intention. No, it was arrogant to claim understanding, but he couldn't help but marvel at her magnificent resolve.

"You make me feel alive! Will you stir my heart with your blade, Alma?"

"Yes, I shall pierce you, just as I promised."

Alma pursued two opposing dreams simultaneously.

One was to become Magsarion's weapon and aid him in completing the path to hell.

The other was to liberate her childhood friend from the cycle of death and battle that Kaikhosru had created.

Though the futures they sought were diametrically opposed, they shared a common requirement. They both had to move Kaikhosru's heart before either path could unfold.

"You cut down a coward, yet he remains oblivious. Risk your life, and only then will he meet his end."

Magsarion, shadowing Alma closely, spoke with an eerie tone. The relentless warrior, driven by an insatiable desire to kill 'everyone' without hesitation, had no intention of reducing Kaikhosru to lifeless remains. No, he intended to grant him life, only to snatch it away afterwards. This twisted and distorted path was the only way he knew.

‘However, once the heart of the dragon starts beating, there will be no place left for his hegemony. On the other hand, it is uncertain whether Magsarion will be consumed, and the balance could shift unexpectedly.

But when the dragon's heart is beating, his hegemony will be completed. Conversely, there is a high chance that Magsarion will be swallowed, and it is impossible to predict where the scales will tip.

Alma wished for both outcomes equally. To say that she was undecided would be an understatement. She had ventured to the extremes. She yearned for Magsarion's embrace, while also seeking to grasp Kaikhosru's heart.

Such sharp, unyielding, and sinful behavior was uncharacteristic of her...

"She's a... greedy bitch, she desires both of us so intensely. Ahhh, it drives me mad."

Thus, Kaikhosru made his decision with dismay, which Magsarion had already anticipated.

Alma's attack, borne of the former's ‘vessel’ and the latter's ‘logic,’ pierced through and fluttered his heart. It was a solitary expression of a minuscule mechanism, yet immensely impactful.

And then, without delay...

"I shall make it all come true. Love that comes at the cost of your life."

"...I... I would be most delighted if you did."

Alma closed her eyes, and Kaikhosru kissed her forehead.

A dark, lethal wind encircled their very beings. In the fleeting moments before his life's end, the essence of the higher Law flowed out, absorbed by Magsarion. The true meaning of this occurrence remained obscure for now, but undoubtedly, it would hold significance in the future.

What was certain, however, was that each of the three parties had fulfilled their respective roles. Magsarion gazed solemnly upon their falling heads, their faces twisted with both greed and delight.

## 5

The majestic dragon, adorned with vibrant hues that spanned the heavens, gradually dissipated into a misty veil. Roxanne, a witness to the conclusion, stood alongside Sirius, who still valiantly struggled to prevent the emergence of the sanctuary.

Her words were a soft whisper...

"...Leave this situation to me. It is your duty now to reject the past, is it?"

"The first thought that comes to mind is that you two are not just one person, but both the same person."

"Remember, it is crucial not to hesitate in seeking assistance."

"...I have."

Roxanne's calm tone prompted Sirius to sigh and nod. Her otherworldly behavior must have awakened him. From the beginning, he had been left with no choice but to forge his own path.

"Farewell. Truth be told, the days since I met you have been rather pleasant."

"Yes, I've enjoyed them as well."

As Roxanne smiled at Sirius, watching him turn on his heel, she observed the diminishing figure. In an instant, she knew where he was headed and what he intended to do. Yet, it no longer mattered. The world's fate was no longer her primary concern.

"In truth, I think it was always secondary."

Indeed, she held expectations and anticipated the birth of a new world. But her true desires were simpler, more personal, and...

"I'm certain Alma-chan saw right through me."

Fundamentally, Roxanne had always prioritized her own enjoyment. Altruistic devotion or similar sentiments were foreign to her. She remained unaware that the emotions she experienced in that moment were the answer she sought.

Without hindrance, Roxanne began to walk. Numerous eyes followed her, yet she strode across the observation deck without hesitation, like a saint parting the sea with grace and majesty. She paid no mind to Magsarion, who had descended to the ground in the aftermath

of their fierce battle. In this moment, Roxanne's gaze was fixed on a single point on the stage.

Amidst the painfully tense atmosphere, she reached her destination and sank to her knees. Tenderly, she extended her hand, caressing the two objects lying before her as though cherishing them.

Were the warm droplets cascading down Alma's and Kaikhosru's necks mere illusions?

Did their shoulders quiver with grief as they embraced, kissed, and brushed each other's cheeks?

The lamentations of the Dragon Jewel Princess reverberated through the air. Her sorrowful and desolate demeanor, simultaneously heart-wrenching and beautiful, was an unmistakable expression of grief.

"How dare you steal my man and my sister?"

Radiant joy illuminated Roxanne's face. The tears flowed ceaselessly, uncontrollable. Yet, they possessed a purity too pristine, too devoid of the muddled contradictions that plagued human emotions.

"Thank you, Magsarion. Finally, I can realize my dream."

Ever since that day when Kaikhosru saved her, Roxanne had yearned to give her life for him. It was the same love and conflict that Alma experienced with Magsarion—a love that could kill the one they cherished. Like Alma, who had to become a threat to be desired, Roxanne's emotions possessed a dangerous duality: to embrace and be embraced by the deadly warrior.

She has no natural desires other than pleasure. Just as the good intentions of separation, which she had once chosen, turned out to be an insult to the man. No matter how much I pray for someone, I cannot make it come true in a worthy way.

Her innate desire was simple—to revel in her own pleasure.

The separation she once chose, with the best of intentions, turned out to be an act of scorn toward the man. No matter how fervently she prayed for someone, she couldn't manifest it in a proper manner.

"As long as Kaikhosru lives... I will avenge him. Thus, this is a blessing. In a battle of mourning, I can fight and die for him without regret. I wish to leave behind the legacy of the dragon consumed by Magsarion, however small, in the forthcoming new world. I wanted him to live. I yearned to witness Kaikhosru reigning over the world. But equally, I madly dreamed of this situation. Treasonous? Catastrophic? Yes, perhaps. But it was beyond my control. After all, I was the kind of woman he loved." "Fatima."

"Yes?"

Roxanne rose to her feet, and the Sapphire Princess stepped forward, answering Roxanne's call.

"Shahira."

"Present, Eldest Sister."

Next, Princess Vajra followed suit.

"Kasar, Zainab, Shifar, Malyam, Laila, Artika, Luluah, Tannaz, Soreira, Seren, Aisha, Nasrin, Elharm, Wishdahn!"

All the mistresses stood next to Roxana. The sixteen women stood solemnly, their ethereal forms intertwining with their physical bodies, facing the black, deadly sword. Together, the seventeen women, adorned in their tragic and exquisite demonic spirits, confronted the somber sword.

"Let us dance to our heart's content."

One could argue that the outcome was evident. However, it held no consequence.

They fought for love.

There was no shame, no regret— only a fleeting ecstasy that merged with the ephemeral wind.



With His Majesty Sirius's departure, we were once again liberated to act as we saw fit. The tumultuous battle unfolding between Magsarion, Roxanne, and the others below filled us with concern, but we couldn't allow ourselves to become ensnared in that quagmire now.

"Alma, you're gone..."

"Don't shed tears, Ashozushta. Alma stayed true to her convictions. Our focus should be on reaching Sirius!"

"Yes, it could be worse. But..."

If there was a way for us to pursue him, we would have done so already. Alas, we found ourselves trapped in a predicament where such a pursuit seemed impossible.

"Since a while ago, my teleportation hasn't been functioning properly. Is Vohu Mana interfering?"

"Likely so. A-chan is an outsider here, restricted in her actions on this planet."

"But if we merely fly towards the capital, we'll arrive too late. It'll take more than ten hours!"

Knowing that every passing second brings us closer to our impending doom, is there no way to break free from this impasse? Frustration consumed me until A-chan spoke with a resolute tone, muttering an unconventional suggestion.

"If that's the case, we'll need to approach this differently than usual. It might be rough and perilous, but are you okay with that?"

"What? Oh, I see. You're proposing we employ the same method you used when fighting the Locusts, aren't you?"

Though I had no inkling of what she meant, Ferdows appeared to grasp her intention. He seemed to believe it was a viable plan. With his endorsement, there was no reason for me to doubt. Time was of the essence, so I promptly nodded in agreement, without even seeking an explanation.

"It doesn't matter, I'll follow your plan, but..."

"I don't mind. I'll trust your plan. Just... there's one thing I want to say right now, something I truly feel."

I expressed my sentiments, eager to convey my genuine gratitude amidst the chaos.

"I'm grateful that, despite everything that's happened, you still see me as a friend. I truly, truly appreciate it."

It may have been a cliché, but those words held my heartfelt sincerity.

"What's the point now? You're a pesky water dweller."

"Right from the start, I knew you were someone who always found trouble."

Their response, nonchalant and lighthearted, both amused and pained me. I would forever cherish the bashful smiles that adorned their faces.

"You're going to defeat the Divine Sword, aren't you?"

"There are battles that A-chan cannot partake in. So, Quinn, I need you to make me a promise. No matter what lies ahead for us, you must forge your own path. You must walk your own journey, just as Alma and Samluch did."

"Yes. I will never look back."

Because I believed in them. We had pledged to conquer our respective battles.

"Very well, then. Let's proceed. Come, Ashozushta."

"I'll handle it!"

And so, with malevolence and glee luring us in, we ventured forth into the abyss of hell.



"Let us embark anew, starting from the very beginning."

Sirius contemplated as he wandered through the desolate corridors on his return to the royal castle. The weight of shame pressed upon him, prompting him to question the depths of his transgressions in this world.

"Was it my initial sin to believe in my own superiority and aspire to become a valiant hero?"

"No, it was not. Such delusions of grandeur are common in childhood. If that were the cause, the world would be teeming with others like me.

"Why, then, did others not stumble down the same path as I did? The answer is self-evident. They grasped the reality early on, understanding the limitations of their aspirations and acknowledging their own capabilities."

Memories of encounters with formidable adversaries and the taste of defeat at his father's hands flooded Sirius's mind. However, he couldn't help but question his true first setback...

"The first time I laid eyes on him... I believed it was when Varhran bested me, but perhaps that wasn't the case,

In truth, Sirius had long been aware of this, and it was his refusal to admit it that distorted his very being.

"Nahid..." he whispered, fully cognizant of his past failures.

He recognized that his first setback resided in his relationship with his sister. Nahid, who remained enclosed within herself, her silence akin to that of an inanimate doll. There was only one reason why he hadn't acknowledged this as the moment he faced the harsh realities of life— a continuous series of undeniable defeats as he tried, futilely, to extricate her from the darkness, only to be met with failure at every turn.

"Perhaps I didn't want to give in..."

He harbored no concern about losing to Varhran in combat, inferiority in skill, or any other aspect where he fell short. However, he couldn't accept his own inadequacy in one critical aspect— to save Nahid. The brave facade crumbled effortlessly before her eyes.

"But I... even I could have done it."

Despite potentially taking longer than Varhran, Sirius believed Nahid's smile would have shone just as brilliantly as his own.

"I understand why I clung to such a foolish illusion..."

He had desired his sister, viewing her as a woman above all else. The grotesqueness and unspeakable animalistic desire within him made it impossible to label it as love. If love represented the strongest of emotions, then there was no love within him. Consequently, he saw himself as a worthless man, tainted by filth, shame, and ignorance. His yearning for salvation was nothing more than a desire for Varhran to shield him from his own ugliness. If only he could maintain his dazzling "legend" and unite with Nahid, Sirius would remain blissfully unaware of the darkness festering within his heart.

"As a good brother and a good friend, I could have celebrated their departure," he acknowledged bitterly.

"...and so on, it's my fault that I kept running away."



Sirius realized that offering Nahid to Kaikhosru would have been just another form of escape.

"I feared sullyng myself at this stage of my life. I should have fallen and been slain by the hands of my friends."

Self-mockery echoed within him, akin to the wails of the deceased. In truth, Sirius had long abandoned hope for his own existence. If only he had acknowledged his repulsive nature during the tournament, accepting his fate as a bestial, lust-driven loser, the trajectory of his life might have been different.

"I believe that, by now, a genuine cycle of grandeur would have been established— a world where no one would shed tears, an ideal that eluded me due to my cowardly escape on that day."

"Though he could never revisit that distant past, Sirius stood there, attempting to rectify his mistakes. He confronted the true essence of his worthlessness, exposing his dark side to the light of day. He longed for a world of decay, seeking the ultimate demise brought forth by the "true" hand that would materialize at the end.

"I yearn for my own demise. I ask you to obliterate me entirely, to deny me and erase all my sins and shame," he fervently declared.

"Varhran, Varhran— my friend, let the pain of your sword piercing me become my salvation!"

Facing the room where Nahid slumbered, Sirius craved a magnificent doom, a purifying flame. He prayed; his hand inching closer to the doorknob.

"Thank you very much, brother, for your long, meaningless, and futile soliloquy. I regret to inform you that there is no truth to your contemplations."

"I hear a voice...", Sirius muttered, taken aback by the unexpected interruption.

"It's all deception, a farce, delusional ramblings. If anyone else were present, I would advise them to cease listening. But I find delight in such fiction," the voice continued.

As if under a spell, Sirius found himself inside the room. His sister, as he remembered her, lay peacefully asleep, frozen in time for the past two decades.

"Why do I still hear voices? They reverberate in my mind, unsettling my very being," he wondered, struggling to comprehend the significance of the words that seemed to consume his soul.

"Yet, above all, the meaning behind these words— 'And yet, oh, oh, what a wondrous tableau of life it is, not being able to forget love and never relinquishing hope. You are the savior.'"

A peculiar device slipped from Sirius's grasp, falling to the floor. It was a mechanism to release the Seal of Freeze, but whether or not he had pressed the button remained unclear. Yet, the efficacy of the seal seemed inconsequential at this point.

If commanded to sleep, Nahid would sleep.

If commanded to awaken, she would awaken.

She obediently followed the script bestowed upon her.

In response to the darkness that consumed Sirius, an equally murky darkness swirled around him. Voices, melodies heard countless times before, melodies that had healed, inundated the room like incantations.

"If you seek a rotten world, I will make it rot away."

A performance of outstanding talent began, a dance of Star Spirits unleashed with fervor. Gathering in multitudes, surpassing thousands, tens of thousands, or even hundreds of millions, they cried out without exception. Compelled by an overpowering supernatural force, they congregated around the Lord, a chaotic frenzy of existence.

"What are you...?" Sirius started to question, but his words were cut short.

Even the fact that the Vohu Mana was stripped from his soul was not in Sirius' mind.

"It's Nahid. Have you forgotten your sister's name?"

A sound akin to the slicing of thick paper echoed. From within the frozen boundaries, a blade exuding unfathomable malevolence emerged. Eyes, noses, and mouths twisted in agony adorned the blade, a collection of countless Star Spirits forcibly intertwined and condensed into the shape of a sword. It was an ominous sight, a seemingly endless and invincible weapon capable of cleaving even the heavens.

A sensation of peculiar déjà vu washed over Sirius - an eerie parody of the Divine Sword, distorted and corrupted in the most abhorrent manner.

"This one is called Aka Manah."

The weight of her words hung in the air, laced with an unsettling allure that sent shivers down the spine. It was as if she reveled in the grotesque and reveled in her creation, born from a deep-rooted animosity towards Ahura Mazda, the object of her brother's disdain.

The master of the sword appeared neatly and modestly while announcing its name. Perhaps as part of her role-playing, her clothes had changed, as if she were a bride of darkness tainted with madness, but her smile and presence, reminiscent of a clear stream, were exactly the same as in days gone by.

“That is why it is so horrifying that it makes you want to vomit. Since brother hated Ahura Mazda, I created something like it!”

The younger sister, bearing the weight of the ultimate magic sword, stood atop the stage of despair, a cypress tree stretching out beneath her. Her presence was undeniable, an embodiment of both power and melancholy. There was an undeniable certainty to her purpose, as though she had accepted her role in this tragic story.

On this fateful day, the deluge of Collapse surged forth, engulfing the domain of the Sacred Realm.



The name Aka Manah, dubbed as the seventh Demon King, held little significance in Sirius' eyes. It seemed more like a concept yet to come to fruition— a mere unborn infant whose existence revolved around the future.

Viewing it as a tangible threat was far from realistic. Instead, Sirius envisioned Aka Manah as a looming shadow that shouted its existence into the void. From the perspective of Vohu Mana, the seventh Demon King appeared as an uncertain fluctuation with ethereal coordinates that overlapped with the Sacred Realm.

This demon's name, coupled with the absence of overt activities, hinted at its hidden nature as a resident of the other side as a possibility. Depending on the course of events, it could be sealed away or set free. The crux of the matter lay in maintaining control without relinquishing the initiative. Aka Manah, the name bestowed by Sirius, was merely one of these potential outcomes.

Until this moment, until now.

"Do you like it? I arranged it for you brother," Nahid uttered, presenting a creation that embodied Sirius' darker side.

It embodied his hatred for the Divine Sword, the crucifixion of Varhran offered as a sacrifice to 'everyone.' This scene forcefully reminded Sirius of a day he desperately wished to forget but couldn't.

"I can't wield it against anyone but myself," she confessed. "However, as a priestess, I will follow my brother's will. Please forgive me."

Sirius listened to Nahid's cheerful words and detected no trace of evil. It was evident that her love for her brother ran deep, leaving him at a loss.

"What are you saying...?"

Sirius's voice emerged hoarse, akin to that of a dying old man. He wasn't an ideal confidant for such conversations.

Hearing his question, Nahid smiled sweetly.

"Well, well, isn't it because my brother desired shamelessness? To transcend the **Avesta** and reach beyond good and evil, you needed to join forces with a new Demon King to replace Kaikhosru. That's why I've aided you, even if only in a small way.

Though Nahid had been sealed away for a considerable period, she demonstrated a remarkable grasp of the situation. And her argument held merit. The most effective means of dismantling existing laws and constructing a new world was to upend the irreconcilable differences between light and darkness. However, there was an evasive quality to Nahid's approach that Sirius found unacceptable.

"Why do you take the initiative to fulfill my desires?"

"Because I love my brother."

This was not the Nahid that Sirius knew. She was pure and innocent—a "legend," unlike himself.

"Then, please do with me as you wish."

It felt like a nightmare, a broken puppet show reflecting his own ugly emotions. Sirius longed to cover his eyes and ears, to run away, thinking, "Yes, this must be a dream."

Fear coursed through him, driving the desperate urge to escape.

[illegible]

Nahid's voice shifted instantaneously, shifting from cheerfulness to silence at Sirius' command. The abrupt change in behavior resembled that of a mechanical device, accompanied by the illusionary clinking of gears.

Was this the sister who, fleetingly scattered, danced at her brother's whim under the influence of primal desires?

Or was this the younger sister who, embracing the same destructive love as her brother, tumbled down the same path?

The distinction mattered little.

"You're a demanding brother, aren't you? I'll let you ravage me, just as you've wished for years. So, why hesitate?"

"But you..."

Now, Sirius was nothing more than a captive of confusion. He couldn't fathom Nahid's motivations. He couldn't even discern his own desires.

"You told me earlier that my thoughts were nothing but delusions," he mumbled.

He believed Nahid had declared him a wretched individual consumed by incestuous love for his sister. That single revelation had left an indelible mark on his heart. Yet, he remained unclear on how Nahid, the one who unveiled this truth, was exploiting the situation.

"What is right? What is wrong? Where does truth reside?"

Unintentionally, Sirius found himself posing foolish questions, his voice strained and feeble.

"What does my darkness look like?"

"It's Varhran, isn't it?"

Nahid responded promptly, without a hint of doubt.

"What you truly love is Varhran. The immorality of falling in love with him has driven you into a twisted and monstrous madness. I am merely a substitute, a convenient mask to conceal it all. I can't erase the fact that you've fallen for him, so this is just a way to make it all fit."

"That's absurd...!"

"Why? It makes perfect sense, doesn't it? From the first moment you encountered Varhran, you found yourself in a pitiable state. Yet, it's peculiar that you don't despise him. In fact, you even idolize him."

And what of it?"

Nahid raised a finger, her mischievous eyes narrowing.

"It's love."

"No!"

Sirius vehemently shook his head, nearly screaming. He refused to accept that the feelings he harbored for his friend could be likened to that.

"... I am indeed, as you say, obsessed with Varhran. That may be deemed abnormal from an outsider's perspective," Sirius admitted, his words carrying a heavy weight.

The alter ego of the Divine Sword had labeled him cursed, an assessment that he couldn't deny. Yet, at a deeper level, Sirius knew himself as a man incapable of love.

"There is no love in me. I don't love you or Varhran!" he declared, his voice strained.

"Yes, perhaps you are right," Nahid replied calmly, her words sinking in like venom.

The two of them had been locked in the same room for what felt like an eternity. In the midst of the stillness, Nahid's voice pierced through, devoid of any emotion.

"Because you are worthless. Everything you do has no meaning. So, what does it matter? Did you love Varhran beyond the boundaries of gender, or did you love me beyond the ties of blood? The answer doesn't change the fact that your love is hollow. If it is hollow, then at least smile," she suggested, her tone oddly joyful.

"If it is hollow, then at least laugh about it," she added, her words laced with a strange sense of mirth.

"How about this script, then? You and I will have a child, and that child will be the next Varhran. If his sister continues to engage in a forbidden relationship with him, wouldn't it be perfect in every sense? I would love them both, reveling in joy, sorrow, and sometimes jealousy. The elder brother would continue his shamelessly agonizing acts, only to be eventually saved by the sword. What a clichéd grand finale!"

"Oh, and if you'd like, we can make the child a girl. The gender of the child is inconsequential, as it would be easier to accept and mold according to the desires of those around. The love-hate relationship between Varhran and his brother as a girl is quite thrilling!" she continued, her words dripping with a disturbing enthusiasm.

It was a future of shamelessness, one that Sirius found himself unable to accept or comprehend. And yet, even in this unholy fantasy, Nahid showed no malice in her heart. In fact, she appeared as calm as a mirror, her intentions shrouded in a disconcerting lack of self-awareness. She was merely trying to embody the darkness within Sirius, a mass of fiction devoid of any desires of her own. If she wished, she could play her role without discomfort.



But the reason behind her farce was evident— she sought to completely dismantle her brother's dignity, fulfilling his wish to embrace shamelessness.

"Just as the script indicates, according to your desires..."

"Impossible..." Sirius muttered, understanding the truth of her words.

But alongside that understanding, a sense of rebellion began to stir within him. No matter how cruel the world was, no matter how irredeemable a person he might be, there had to be a sanctuary that remained brilliant and inviolable. There had to be.

For Sirius, his sister represented that sanctuary— a "real" person who he couldn't accept as an empty performer. And so, he clung to her, his voice desperate.

"This is a mistake! Where is my real sister? Don't play with me, you impostor!" he cried out, pointing at Aka Manah, who devoured Star Spirits relentlessly.

"The Nahid I knew didn't possess the power to create such a thing. That proves you're a fake!"

"Oh, you mean that?" Nahid replied, shrugging her shoulders as if discussing yesterday's weather.

"That perception was merely a reflection of how you saw me back then. At that time, no one could conceive of a force formidable enough to rival Varhran."

"What do you mean...?" Sirius asked, his confusion evident.

"I am just playing the role I'm assigned. I perform as desired. If the writer's perspective changes, so does the script, and the play expands," she explained, her innocence contrasting with the damning nature of her words.

"I am your copy," she proudly proclaimed, her eyes glistening with a glassy sheen.

"Right now, I exist for all of you. Let's together create chaos in the world, brother."

With a cute pose, Nahid's smile shattered the last stronghold within Sirius— the fragile remnants of his sanity. The young boy who had clung to that sanity was mercilessly shattered and crushed.

Everything was a farce.

Nothing had truly changed.

Nahid remained as she had always been— hollow.

The feelings he held for her smile and the "legend" that had begun with Varhran's achievement were now rendered meaningless illusions. The foundation of his belief that those days had been precious and radiant had been overturned, reducing his ideals to nothing more than a mockery of a foolish man's delusions.

"What should we do then? Fool..." Sirius muttered, his world collapsing around him.

Sirius recoiled and sat awkwardly on his buttocks. He opened his mouth wide and stared into space without even blinking.

The first realization that dawned upon him was his own foolishness. The only salvation that awaited him was madness. Yes, madness was his only escape. If he could become a numb, lifeless puppet, forgotten and left to decay, it would be a fitting end for a worthless man. But even that sliver of hope was denied him. He was so wretched that he couldn't even die first.

"But I believe in you," Nahid whispered lovingly as she embraced Sirius, holding him close to her chest. She kissed his forehead gently, recounting memories of their sibling bond.

"Stand up once more, just as you did back then," she urged.

"The brother who wielded the sword in despair at the deeds of the 'Mere Old Man' was incredibly strong and full of life... I was exhilarated beyond words. I couldn't contain my excitement. If there is a true monster in this world, it must be this sister," she added, her words laced with both affection and menace.

"First, let us set the stage. I will warm it up for you, so show me your most heroic performance."

In the blink of an eye, she soared away with a gust of wind, crashing through the ceiling and disappearing into the sky, leaving no trace behind. All that remained were the fractured voices and laughter of the Star Spirits, and Sirius, a mere husk of a man who had lost everything.



Ascending to the heights of the stratosphere, Nahid cast her tender gaze upon the glittering tapestry of life below, the stars twinkling in the vast expanse. Within her eyes, there was no hint of

malevolence, a testament to her purity. Yet, her purity did not equate to conformity, for to exist without vice was the ultimate heresy.

The epitome of absolute whiteness was akin to nothingness itself, embodying the essence of absolute zero. Nahid understood that there was no inherent truth and that meaninglessness was the only truth. Sirius's white flame represented a part of this truth, albeit in a different manner.

"Let us sing, let us perform. If everything is but a farce, let us make it a grand spectacle."

She could be anything or nothing, possessing the boundless potential to become whatever was desired of her, traversing the script that had been prepared. The fact that she had created and utilized a Demon King named Aka Manah in her current state demonstrated her transcendence beyond the boundaries of mortals.

The Star Spirits that formed the material for the magic sword were blended together, regardless of their black or white nature, proving that Nahid had surpassed the laws known to the world.

"Dance and revolve, innocent prayers. Stand tall and be exhilarated, my dear children. This is the holy **Commandment** of our vow," Nahid proclaimed, her words resonating with both purity and power.

Thus, the songs she wove were held in a different dimension than those of the past 20 years. While the blessings bestowed through the Star Spirits remained the same, the perception and definition of the groups took on diverse forms from varying perspectives.

"Oh, how splendid your sword is. Your bravery is my beacon of hope," she expressed, marveling at the resplendent weapon.

Truly, it was a transformation. Aka Manah, devoid of color, cried out in profound anguish and released a prayer of liberation to the stars that each of them ruled.

"Fall. Fall. Everything is but emptiness, and good and evil are mere illusions," she proclaimed, lamenting the tragedy of being consumed by such illusions, appealing to the souls of all.

"I dream, so please allow me to witness. Allow me to gaze upon your sword one day," she pleaded.

This was the purpose behind Aka Manah's existence, designed to fulfill Varhran's final "May it serve as a guiding light for all," Nahid whispered softly.

What ensued was a forced transference, obliterating the concept of duality. The inverted blessings, diffused around Nahid, surged forth like a tidal wave, engulfing the stars of the universe. Those who believed their values to be absolute truths were plunged into a frenzied turmoil, reminiscent of the events that occurred twenty years ago.

Bonds were shattered,

Beliefs incinerated.

And they were callously reminded that they were nothing more than playthings to be manipulated.

In the face of this chaos, the magic sword cried out in madness, "Be confused. Be confused. Despair. Be enlightened by the end of it all."

For in the realization that everything was hollow and false, one could experience the freedom to dance without restraints.

Nahid observed the storm of anger, lamentation, and joy with a compassionate smile, embracing the tumultuous emotions with all her senses. Her power was so immense that it was no wonder Kaikhosru sought to obtain Aka Manah as his trump card through the deal for Nahid. Yet, despite her unrivaled power, Nahid was far from perfect.

Her forced fall was limited to the stars that comprised the magic sword. Though the number of stars continued to increase, it had not yet reached a scale vast enough to upend the entire universe.

Moreover, her abilities had no effect on those who shared the same perspective as her, nor did they target beings untouched by the protection of the Star Spirits. In this regard, Nahid was not a vessel for a higher God, one who could emanate new laws into a new '**Heaven**'.

She was a mere performer, utterly reliant on the script. Without it, she was powerless. If summoned, she could effortlessly pierce through the heavens, but in her current state, she was akin to a mere tool.

"I cannot do as I please, so revel in it to the fullest."

More than anyone else, she resembled a marionette, embodying the impermanence and absurdity of the theatrical performance known as life. Emptiness was her mantle, for within the laws that governed Nahid lay a profound enigma.

The one who accomplishes the miracle desired as the ultimate of white to fulfill the prayers of all. She has unrivaled power under heaven, but in essence she is a slave to an idol without a will.

Isn't that what we call "everyone's hero?"

If so, then what was Varhran?

"I shall free you from your shackles. I shall release you from your restraints, so that I may expand the scope of my performance to boundless heights."

In this era, the true hero was Nahid herself. She understood this, and her exchange with Sirius revealed a glimpse of her awareness. She declared that she would do her utmost for 'everyone' now. The defeat she suffered twenty years ago stemmed from the inability to fathom a force that could rival Khvarenah. And when she mentioned 'everyone,' Varhran was not included within that category.

He played the role of a hero as assigned, but Nahid never truly comprehended him. The fact that she only took off her lover's facade when she was alone with Varhran and showed her true colors was not a sign of trust, but rather because she was with someone with whom she did not have to act with. He existed outside the boundaries of the script, a being distinct from 'everyone'.

With Varhran gone, it is safe to say that Nahid had awakened as the true hero. It was prudent for Sirius to keep his distance from his sister after the loss of his friend. Once awakened, the Profuse Demonic Cherry Blossoms would inevitably set things into motion, whether desired or not.

The Great Fall, the pinnacle and final miracle performed by a valiant soul, marked the end of the nonsensical comedy of fluctuating good and evil.

No, it was the beginning.

Unraveling one mystery merely gave birth to new mysteries, yet Nahid remained faithful to her duty. At this moment, she sensed a minor anomaly and sought to rectify it.

"Oh, what a delightful young lady. Are you one of Ahura Mazda's followers?"

Nahid noticed a feeble entity ensnared by the demon sword, struggling to retain its identity and resist. With gentle hands, she implored it to listen, to succumb to her guidance.

"The weapon of a comrade who should have walked the same path, yet, alas, the Divine Sword has forsaken its duty and betrayed us. I understand that it possesses its own intentions, but a tool

should not possess its own purpose. Thus, I offer my apologies and bid you farewell. Rest well, my dear, and find solace," she murmured, crushing it with a gentle yet merciless squeeze.

Meticulously, she grounded the ants beneath her knuckles, reducing them to insignificance and formlessness.

Within a whirlpool of magic swords, Nahid eradicated Ashozhuta, vanquishing her entirely.



In approximately ten minutes, I arrived at the grand royal castle. It was an incredibly swift journey, considering the circumstances. However, the scene around me revealed that all was not well.

To put it simply, A-chan possessed the incredible ability of ultra-fast flight, a divine blessing. As the leader of the Sky Burial Sphere, she was unmatched in her flying prowess, rumored to reach speeds nearing that of light itself. Nevertheless, controlling such speed proved challenging, and under Vohu Mana's interference, her efforts were akin to flying blindfolded. Consequently, things did not unfold as she had hoped.

I swiftly passed through the royal city, executing a U-turn, and found myself here. The Sacred Realm simmered with the same scorching heat that marked the tragic end of Varhran's life. The world, which mere moments ago had been populated by our fellow countrymen, had undergone a profound transformation, leaving no trace of its former self.

It had become a nightmarish realm, characterized by uncontrollable chaos. The sudden alteration of values, combined with the inherent lack of camaraderie among the blackened souls, had plunged society into an uncontrollable frenzy. People attacked one another without comprehension, their blood-curdling screams echoing through the air. In this tumultuous state, I seized the opportunity to infiltrate the royal castle.

Fortuitously, the place was nearly deserted since the main authorities and bureaucrats had congregated on the New Continent. Furthermore, I had managed to escape the wave of forced downfalls myself. In essence, it was not over yet. The situation was disheartening, but I firmly

believed that we had not yet reached the true depths of despair, the darkest of days... and I was determined to prevent such a future.

And now, I am standing in front of Sirius.

“I will not offer you empty condolences, saying, ‘...I am sorry for your loss’. The darkness that has manipulated your life is unfathomably deep and cruel, and it would be disingenuous of me to offer shallow comfort.”

I knelt down and spoke softly to the broken man, perhaps the greatest victim in the universe.

His eyes had lost their light, his open mouth an empty void, while his parched skin and wrinkled face, resembling deep fissures, testified to the severity of his wounds. Only he could truly fathom the pain he endured, and only he would be shattered by it. Thus, it seemed right to let him rest peacefully, without uttering another word.

Yet, even if it were a sinful act, even if it brought him more anguish, I needed to convey something to him.

Quinn's feelings.

I was resolved not to let the savior she loved, Sirius, become a worthless puppet, forever subject to the whims of fate.

"I do not possess love within me, nor am I capable of loving another'. You seemed to voice this sentiment repeatedly..."

My voice dissipated into the void, evoking no response. Nonetheless, I pressed on, undeterred.

"In a sense, you were correct. When you encountered Varhran... I do not mean this metaphorically. It is not the same as stealing your heart, captivating you, liking you, or falling in love with you. It is, quite literally, exactly as it is— a heinous act of cruelty and shamelessness.

He was a courageous man... No, it seems wrong to call him that now, but he held a peculiar belief. He always would emerge victorious, and as the spoils of triumph, he would claim the most valuable possession of his vanquished foes. It could be their strength or abilities, but in your case, he deprived you of 'love.' Your cherished sword, one that was irreplaceable to you, was taken away.”

As a result, their relationship was predetermined. Despite the tragedies that befell Sirius, he would continue to pursue Varhran. He suffered under the guise of friendship, longing, or infatuation,

clinging to the very person responsible because he yearned to reclaim the love he once held. He could not forget the precious treasure he lost to Varhran.

“You aspired to create a world where no one would have to shed tears. Isn't that what you desired?”

At this question, Sirius's eyes wavered for the first time. It was a subtle change, but it proved that he had not yet been completely broken.

That's right, this person is stronger and kinder than all the others. I know he can't break down here.

"You previously referred to it as a curse, but you were mistaken. It is true that it began as an abominable fate, but you did not succumb to it. You never forgot the love you lost and managed to reignite that flame from scratch. That, Sirius, is nothing short of a miracle. You loved Quinn."

"...no."

A weak, hoarse voice protested, driven by sheer determination. Sirius's spirit, which had traversed to the other side, had returned to this side.

"It is... impossible for me to love someone."

"And why is that? You and Quinn share a similar modesty. You should have more confidence."

"It is not love, for we fabricated it as a political decision to conceal our own flaws. We do not deserve to revel in being loved, for we failed to banish the darkness."

Both of them were undeniably similar, sharing an acute awareness of the value of love's sentiment. They were burdened by the unworthiness that went unrecognized, hanging their heads in remorse for their respective partners and lamenting their own failings.

"The beauty of tears lies in their ability to endure in circumstances where shedding them is inevitable. A world where such sentiments prevail will never achieve true peace."

“Yes, you may be right. But if only the end result is considered real, then is the brilliance experienced along the way false?”

“No, it is not."



Tossed about by whimsical fates, leaning on each other despite their initial connection being born of shared wounds, Sirius and Quinn strove to nurture their love, though their relationship licked each other's wounds at first.

"You were moving forward, without a doubt."

The prayer, which still radiated brightly without fading, even after being stolen by Varhran, represented the true hegemony.

"I reiterate, this is a miracle. You are a savior destined to construct a new world, one more magnificent and extraordinary than that of any hero."

"No...!"

This time, the denial was even stronger, yet I remained undeterred and unperturbed by his outward demeanor. It was a process of unraveling the tangled web of cause and effect. I understood it would not be an easy task, but I believed it was my mission, my path to redemption, to guide him back to where he rightfully belonged.

"If I possessed such power, Nahid would not have suffered the way she did. If I possessed such power, Nahid would have grown into an independent, self-reliant individual from a young age!"

"Then why do you believe you couldn't have saved her?"

"That's a foolish question... I was likely intoxicated by the beautiful tale of a brother caring for his sister. I was merely a child seeking to embody a childish hero, without truly considering Nahid's needs. At best, my capacity was nothing but wasted potential."

"No!"

I shook my head, responding in the same manner he had previously denied me.

"Think again. Nahid represents the thoughts of 'everyone' within the system. She is incompatible with the architects of the new world who strive to break free from the constraints of existing laws."

"'Everyone' was terrified in the face of your benevolence. It is the collective's instinct for self-preservation. The overwhelming will to resist this situation flowed strongly into Nahid, causing her to shut herself off as a defensive measure. Or perhaps this internal conflict led her to a state of stagnation."

"...That is preposterous and impossible."

"No, it is an incredibly logical hypothesis. Nahid awakened after Varhran's arrival because your love had been taken, triggering a shift in the script. From then on, it appears that Nahid regained her original function and began to play the role she desired..."

"...What do you mean?"

I held my silence for a moment, directing my gaze downward in response to Sirius's question. The following story was built upon a series of assumptions and conjectures, and even Quinn, who possessed deep insight into the Divine Sword's intentions, had never explicitly stated it. However, I had an unshakable conviction that it held true. Thus, I spoke without hesitation.

"Firstly, Varhran, the orchestrator of this situation, is an enigmatic heretic. He is neither a hero nor a champion. Just as he stole your love, he seized the position of 'everyone's hero' from Nahid. He colluded with the Divine Sword, tirelessly pursuing some unknown, peculiar purpose. And where then, do you suppose your sister would have gone?"

"...!"

"Having qualified as a hero but failed to become one, she had no choice but to cling to your love, didn't she?"

I cannot fathom the nature of the communication that transpired between the siblings before my arrival, but one thing remains unquestionable: the current Nahid is laboring tirelessly for the sake of Sirius. No matter how distorted or bewildering her actions may appear, her understanding of 'everyone' is derived solely from her brother's perspective.

This fact underscores her unwavering commitment to his well-being, leaving us with a singular truth.

"Your love has reached Nahid," I declared, emphasizing the profound essence of love itself.

"In her youth, you rescued a desolate soul cursed by God, transforming it into your beloved sister. This is the essence of love, Sirius. Your existence has been embraced and cherished, transcending all boundaries."

"As an elder brother and a savior, I implore you to reclaim your rightful place and rise once more. The outcome is inconsequential. Only when you rediscover your true self will the darkness be vanquished by the light. For you, Sirius, are the brightest star in the heavens."

"'Quinn' confided in me that she loves you when you are like that," I added, emphasizing the profound connection they shared.

In response to my words, Sirius remained silent for a prolonged moment, reflecting upon his life, the burdens he carried, and the losses he endured. The road to healing and redemption might be fraught with anguish, but I had resolved to stand by his side and wait patiently.

As chaos raged outside the castle, time seemed to lose its meaning. Finally, Sirius spoke, seeking answers from within himself.

"I don't care what you or my wife say, I am an ordinary, unremarkable man. I lack perspective, and this trivial side of me feels incongruous with the image of a supposed hero."

Understanding the sincerity and absence of self-deprecation in his question, I offered my perspective.

"In comparison to individuals like Nahid or Varhran, those who possess extraordinary credentials, you may perceive yourself as unremarkable. Magsarion, Varhran, and Kaikhosru, all born under extraordinary circumstances and endowed with unparalleled abilities, may overshadow you. Yet, you, Sirius, are not a mere clown in their presence. There is something that qualifies you to change the world."

"It must be..." I hesitated for a moment, uncertain if my response constituted an answer.

However, I shared my thoughts with conviction. I, who has lost my memory, revealed the significance of my encounter with Sirius and the path I intended to pursue in defiance of Ahura Mazda's precepts and the prevailing causality. I laid bare my intentions without any trace of duplicity.

And after a profound silence, Sirius spoke.

"I understand perfectly."

With swiftness, he rose to his feet and directed his gaze towards the sky beyond the collapsed ceiling. His eyes betrayed no hesitation, only a resolute and dignified will.

He had returned at this moment, recapturing the dreams of his childhood after more than three decades.

"Are you ready to depart?"

"Of course, but do not get me wrong, Divine Sword," he replied. His voice was a sound of a sharp blade, and the point of the sword plunged into my throat. It was a terrible drawing of a sword that I couldn't react to in any way, but strangely enough, my heart of fear was far away. His voice carrying a hint of influence from 'Quinn.'

Sirius, who possessed a kindness unmatched by any other, would not endanger his love again. It filled me with great joy to witness his unyielding conviction, even if it defied logic.

"I may not forgive you entirely, and my wife remains my wife. However, I cannot allow you to go alone. Regardless of the truth, I can only be true to myself," Sirius proclaimed.

"Yes, and there is one more thing I must say," I responded. "Please, my king, show mercy upon us all," I pleaded, offering a heartfelt bow.

In return, the Holy King Sirius gracefully acknowledged my words with a light bow of his own. In the next instant, he disappeared into a whirling tempest of white.

Stripped of his Vohu Mana, he somehow retained the character of a champion, using the remnants of his strength to transcend the ordinary.

Was it an attribute inherent to champions, or was it the inevitable destiny of a king?

Regardless, one thing was clear: it was time for him to traverse the darkness and rescue his sister, who had lost her way amidst its depths.

"And we, too, must follow the path we have chosen," I muttered to myself, aware of the footsteps approaching from behind.

I knew precisely who it was and understood their current state without excessive detail.

"So, do not weep. Do not falter. You promised me, remember?"

"I will always cherish your smile, and your prayers shall forever guide me."

"I may appear peculiar, but if I do not push myself, I shall crumble."

"I shall never allow myself to become Nadare."

There stood Ferdows, alone and bloodied..... as he tumbled down.

## 7

In this era, the esteemed hero was none other than Nahid. When Quinn, a priestess of the Divine Sword, informed us of this, we were prepared for the potential of friendly fire. Our compatibility was lacking, after all.

The day of the signing ceremony held particular significance for Ferdows— it was his Friday, a day when he could tap into the power of the Star Spirits from his hometown. On this day, he would merge with the celestial will as its proxy. Consequently, the likelihood of him being overwhelmed by Nahid's immense power was alarmingly high. Naturally, I had every intention of preventing any contact between Ferdows and Sirius, but I had no inkling of what would unfold if I failed to halt their encounter.

Yet, an intense sense of foreboding gripped me. Even though they were heroes of equal stature, they posed an extraordinary threat to one another. Everyone shared this unspoken concern, which reached my ears in the form of Ferdows' concealed curses simmering within him. Fear clutched at me as I contemplated what he might utter next.

"Can you hear me? I will not allow you to become its plaything," I spoke to Ferdows, but there was no response from him.

I couldn't ascertain whether he was conscious or not. I had witnessed the might of Friday only once before— a kind of madness consumed its wielder. The Star Spirit governing Ferdows' homeland possessed the peculiar attribute of duality. It had a day aspect and a

night aspect, but there is also a part of it. Sirius would undoubtedly refer to it as an ancient entity.

When in sync with Nowruz Fedowsi, the Star Spirit epitomizing duality, Ferdows was no longer the rational individual he typically was. Therefore, he always deemed Fridays as "off days" and seldom tapped into their power. But how ironic it was that this particular day and time arrived. If this was fate, then it was a cruel and merciless law. I resolved to investigate and discover the truth behind these unfolding events.

"Scrap..."

As I made my decision, Ferdows muttered words filled with animosity towards me. Following that, he launched an astonishing assault.

"I will crush you into pieces!" he exclaimed, attacking with his body alone.

The impact was extraordinary. Though I swiftly crossed my arms to defend myself, I couldn't neutralize the full force and was sent hurtling backward. His eyes burned with fury, tainted by curses and resentment, much like Magsarion's.

"Kill, kill— I won't even let you draw breath!"

".....!"

With a single swift stroke, I deflected the razor-sharp sword that gleamed like lightning. I knew the tumbling sensation would not only alter its attributes but also its strength, yet Ferdows failed to comprehend this logic. He retained the same or perhaps even greater strength as before, striking with precision and lethal techniques.

This result was likely due to the violence of the forced Collapse, unlike the mutation of an individual experiencing a breakdown. But such details held no relevance in the present moment. Even if he had been forcibly inverted, I knew that this version of Ferdows was still Ferdows.

The anger, hatred, and sorrow were undoubtedly born from the same genuine personality I knew. Despite the inverted perception and clouded consciousness caused by his guardian Star Spirit's influence, his inner self had not become grotesque and twisted.

No, it must be...

"So, you still mourn for Marika, as always."

"Shut up!"

His frenzy escalated with a furious shout. The dark light gathered like a black sun, then erupted in a cataclysmic explosion. A wave of energy surged forth from directly above us. I was directly hit by the unleashed energy wave, sending me sprawling to the ground. With a deafening roar, the earth cracked, and I feared my body would shatter under the destructive force. And there was more to come.

"I... I don't love anyone. I don't deserve it!"

With the intent to deliver a finishing blow, he raised his sword and charged recklessly. His face, flushed with hatred, distorted in screams that sounded like cries.

".....I care for you, you know."

Ignoring the strain coursing through my body, I leaped up and delivered a powerful punch to Ferdows' side as he descended. Another roar erupted, accompanied by a plume of smoke that billowed and dissipated. Standing alone in the now deserted training ground, I pondered the enigma that had finally fallen into place.

"I recently found out why it didn't work. You followed the same commandment as Magsarion, is not it?"

Now I understood why he had seemed so distant lately. Ferdows had likely distanced himself from us since the previous war to avoid being touched. It was a path that transformed him into a deadly sword. However, his motivations were undoubtedly vastly different from those of Magsarion.

"I am weak," he confessed.

"Because of my weakness, I cannot protect the ones dear to me. If I believed I could shield someone, I would let everyone around me perish just for that sake. I refuse that outcome. Love and being loved are unnecessary burdens, so I will fight alone."

Within those words lay a deep self-loathing— an excruciating shame for his own shamelessness in clinging to his dream of becoming a valiant warrior despite realizing he was merely a vessel. It was a malady akin to Sirius's condition, typical of Ferdows.

It pained me, but I couldn't deny it, for it was the reverse of a responsibility and kindness that surpassed anyone else's. It was his own heart's desire that had pushed him to the brink. Ultimately, it was his lack of power that had cornered him.

There was only one feeling I could convey to Ferdows now. I did my best to casually express it to my friend, who had emerged from the realm of the dusty shroud.

"Please, at the very least, protect yourself. You need not worry about me. Because we are friends. I don't require your protection, and I won't harm you. If you can only touch me with the intent to kill, then I will treat you only with the intent to kill."

Like Alma, who ran into Magsarion, like Samluch, I couldn't simply flee headlong. I knew that adopting a passive-aggressive strategy with a cowardly attitude would only lead to a disastrous outcome. If there was one aspect of our relationship that needed to remain unchanged amidst these circumstances, it was one of equality. That was the only constant we could hold onto in order to secure victory.

"Messing around with..." Ferdows muttered, his gaze fixated on me with dark, intense eyes as he looked up towards the heavens and let out a deafening roar.

"I don't understand!"

Without hesitation, he launched himself at me with incredible speed. I braced myself, assuming a defensive stance, ready to meet his onslaught head-on. In the past, I had crossed swords with Ferdows numerous times, our rivalry driving us forward. If I recall correctly, he had 28 wins, 27 losses, and 34 draws... or something along those lines. And now, within the confines of this very training ground, our battle unfolded.

The missions we undertook together had been grueling and perilous, yet in hindsight, I found solace in them. Those were the days of the past, irretrievable now. Even if they were like a comedy where I was a subservient puppet, dancing at the whims of fate...

"I'm glad I met you. You're the first friend who saw me not as a tool, but as a flawed and ordinary person. I can say with certainty that no one else has ever treated me with such closeness, even when considering my history as a Divine Sword. Ferdows, I love you. I can't bear the thought of you succumbing to Nadare. I'll kill you gently!"



As my knee strike connected, the hilt of his backhand exploded against my temple. In an instant, my consciousness waned. Yet perhaps there was a possibility for him to overturn his fate on his own. It wasn't something we could afford to dwell upon. Ferdows, serious and proud, wouldn't tolerate any shortcuts or sympathies that veered away from his chosen path.

If I intentionally allowed myself to be struck, he would blame himself even more. In doing so, he would inch closer to the role of Nadare. Therefore, I had to face him wholeheartedly.

If Ferdows' determination to save me surpassed his determination to kill me, then perhaps a miracle could unfold. He slashed, struck, stabbed, and kicked me relentlessly, splattering my vision with blood and blurring my sight. But I wouldn't take a single step back. I wouldn't yield!

"We stand here by our own volition! We're not puppets, we're not playthings; we think for ourselves in the face of a seemingly hopeless reality."

It wasn't just me; Ferdows shared the same sentiment. As proof, I could discern a flicker of reason emerging from the depths of his eyes. Despite his body being bound, I knew he was fighting with all his might to accomplish something. I could hear the world groaning under the weight of our clash.

"Are you watching? It's madness... Soon, your reign will come to an end. I don't know what kind of world will arise in the aftermath, but I will start anew, continuing to struggle without ever looking back, until I reach that place."

I believed that this was the only sincerity I could offer as a prayer to all those who were born and perished in this world.

## 8

In the aftermath of slaying the seventeen women, Magsarion's attention was drawn to an unusual occurrence. At his feet lay Roxanne, her serene countenance contrasting with the unexpected hardship he had faced. And then, the world underwent a transformation right before his eyes. A sensation akin to the upheaval of his very core, as if his internal organs had twisted inside out, seized him.

Simultaneously, a contradictory chill coursed through his veins, as though his blood boiled while his bones froze. Magsarion, overwhelmed by shock, could only clutch his face and stagger, but the others present were similarly engulfed, their souls shaken to the core. The powerful figures of the Sacred Realm, the twelve lords, and various officials surrounding Magsarion, erupted in unified screams. Their frenzy reverberated among the onlookers from the observation platform and the guards, spreading confusion throughout.

It was **Tentsui/Collapse**.

A bewildering phenomenon where the inherent attributes one possessed were repeatedly yanked away like pieces in a board game.

A fall.

A forced, massive overturning of common sense.

Having witnessed a similar scene twenty years prior, Magsarion immediately recognized the distinction from the past. A tingling sensation in his feathers informed him that this occurrence was connected to the Star Spirits. Vohu Mana had fallen, and those under his protection had tumbled alongside him. Those remaining from the Dragon Husk Star, left defenseless by Kaikhosru's demise, were similarly ensnared.

The wings of darkness enshrouding the heavens and earth...

Magsarion beheld the extraordinary spiritual power emanating from it. Though ominous and colorless, there was an inexplicable familiarity to Magsarion. The first thought that crossed his mind was that they had shared the same space for over two decades, and the way they regarded each other, the way they prayed and sang... it was evidently different from before.

Ignoring the distance, the voice reached the black knight who was looking into the sky in the direction of the royal capital.

" You have grown, Magsarion."

In the blink of an eye, distance lost its meaning. With utmost precision, a teleportation - too natural and does not cause anything abnormal in him, he who had been situated on new continent found himself suspended high above the Royal Capital, directly confronted by her presence.

"You are..."

"Yes, the woman who was supposed to be your sister-in-law. How do you feel?"

It was Nahid, her hands encircling Magsarion's neck, offering congratulations on their reunion. While they were indeed sister-in-law and brother-in-law, the literal sense of harmony was absent. Their dynamic resembled that of a strong man supporting a helpless woman, an atmosphere simultaneously lewd and reminiscent of prey entwined by a serpent.

In essence, an aura of impending doom pervaded the encounter. It was evident that Nahid harbored no sense of friendship as she openly laid her hands on him. What exacerbated the disquiet was the fact that she displayed no intention to kill him whatsoever. Devoid of joy, sadness, or any emotion, she exuded a complete void. Being touched by her was akin to being touched by air, and it sent shivers down Magsarion's spine.

She remarked, "Oops, you're still the same little smarty-pants. Your aloofness is charming. But since we're here, why don't we have a little chat?"

The sister-in-law made the initial move against her brother-in-law, who was on the verge of swinging his sword in a fit of rage.

"Stay..."

Aka Manah, who had floated alongside Nahid, unleashed a curse in accordance with her will.

Four Star Spirits swirling around the magic sword merged together, simultaneously exerting the power of the captivity system. Unlike lending their protection, each one manifested the authority encompassing the full spirit of the stars. In human terms, it resembled an explosion of latent potential, disregarding the burden, amplified fourfold.

Chains of light ensnared Magsarion. his freedom of action obstructed. Escaping from such restraints was far from easy. Yet, this supernatural occurrence represented only a fraction of Nahid's power. She held dominion over the materials constituting the magic swords, whose numbers continued to grow. The master-slave relationship with the Star Spirits, once insurmountably potent, was now defined with absolute control.

"You see, I am akin to Varhran. Well, consider it a replacement for the power taken by Varhran."

In the past, Nahid had been stripped of her hero status, but in the process, she gained something else. Something so evident that the actual hero would not even notice. By forfeiting her position,

she gained a deeper understanding of her own nature. She abided solely by the **Commandment** to have no personal desires and to be a mere servant. Her power over the Star Spirits was a quid pro quo, a response to the absurdity of someone who was no longer a hero attempting to become one.

As long as Nahid maintained her performer's demeanor, she could reign supreme, dictating the world as it danced to her script.

"What are you playing at, Magsarion?"

"...Shut up, madwoman. I am what I am."

Their conversation continued because he had yet to silence her, but Nahid laughed off his retort.

"I have fond memories of how much this girl used to despise me."

"I won't fear you, and I won't reject you," she declared.

"From my perspective, you're the one being played by Varhran the most," he added. "I thought that if his purpose was to create such things, eventually my brother would ask the same of me. However, as you know, my brother is a bit slow and doesn't always heed my command".

Nahid proceeded to disclose the tale of Sirius's child and her intention to mold them into another Varhran. She dared not reveal this to everyone, but her actions were also an irony tied to Magsarion's birth. A priestess of the Divine Sword, a possessor of magical swords, a hero composed entirely of spoils of war—a hero who plundered everything and was left with emptiness.

When these two groups, men and women, clashed with the cherished offspring they had prepared for each other, a single answer would emerge.

"You too will yearn to fathom the depths of Varhran. I believe this is the best way to unravel the enigma of his true self."

"...So you've been observing me all this time."

"Yes, to meet your expectations. Isn't that what you often do?"

Unraveling her subject with the blade of understanding marked the beginning of fulfilling her purpose. Paradoxical yet logical, to comprehend Magsarion was to delve into the mysteries of Varhran. However, Nahid held no attachment to her former betrothed. She simply aimed to create

the "real thing" that Sirius envisioned, fulfilling her brother's ideals with the birth of a new "hero" at its culmination.

"So what are your thoughts? How about waiting another 20 years or so? I'll let you fight against Varhran, though it will be fake," Nahid proposed.

"I refuse," Magsarion calmly replied, but the killing intent behind his words sent shockwaves through the air.

Nahid instinctively stepped back.

"Even in the old days, I never liked you. I have always hated you more than Sirius and the rest of the fools who carried my brother on their backs and made a mockery of him," Magsarion seethed.

"I was not playing with your brother. In fact, we are the ones who have been harmed, according to the rules."

"Yes, of course, I know that", Magsarion acknowledged.

The sound of tearing flesh reached Nahid not through her ears but through her psychic senses. The chains that bound Magsarion were breaking, and his boundless rage erupted, filled with curses and grudges. The furious warrior, unmatched in his impenetrability, began recounting the incident that marked the beginning of his life.

"My brother used you to manipulate me, but he wasn't a victim or a fool, as I once believed. He was trying to lead us all somewhere, playing the role of a hero. It took me some time to admit it, but... you're right, he's playing with me."

The tragedy of twenty years ago was a calculated defeat. The key to understanding lies in maximizing the value of every move. Since that day, everything changed. The world, both individually and on a grand scale, descended into chaos, with all roads converging on Varhran. To bring "everyone" somewhere - the truth is still unknown, but I can say one thing.

"We were destroyed."

The souls of everyone involved with the hero, be it Sirius, Nahid, or Magsarion, were tainted by the curse of Varhran's demise. They had all fallen into the depths of evil.

It felt as though the world had lost its main characters.

Those who were meant to fulfill their roles were stripped of their qualifications, while those who ascended to power departed with a clean facade. There was no need to ask anymore who the true shameless one was.

"So why— "

Magsarion began, breaking free from his restraints and pointing his free hand.

"— ?"

At that moment, did the smile on Nahid's face truly reflect her innermost intentions?

"It sickens me. It's vile. Disgusting, repulsive," Magsarion muttered, his voice turning into a terrifying whisper.

"Let me repeat, 'sister-in-law.' I believe I can unravel my brother's mystery with your help,"

Meanwhile, Nahid swiftly activated her own technique.

"As will I."

A wall of flesh materialized, encompassing everyone except Ferdows and those who had served under Kaikhosru as soldiers. They were summoned into the airspace, totaling no less than 100,000. Each of them had mastered advanced combat techniques and were frenzied, willing to self-harm due to their **Tentsui**-induced state. They fused together, forming a colossal Titan that obeyed Nahid's commands, wreaking havoc at her will.

With a roar of anguish, the Titan swung a fist capable of toppling mountains, but Magsarion deflected it with a single strike. He not only cleaved through the Titan with ease but also retaliated by piercing a large hole in its chest with his sword.

'They have already seen us; it's no big deal.' Undeterred by the sight that would crush an ordinary person's heart, he turned each Titan into a mere backdrop for his lethal swordplay.

He hadn't been idle during the past three months. He had anticipated a major upheaval on the day of the signing ceremony. Thus, an enemy of this magnitude was nothing more than a stroke of luck. It may have only bought him a dozen seconds, but that was ample time for Nahid.

'This will be troublesome the first time around.'

The capturing technique in her second move was similar to the first, but the depth of concentration was different. The number and strength of the Star Spirits bound together had reached a whole new level. As Magsarion approached, a prayer of terrifying intensity unfolded.

"Multiply by two hundred million," Nahid chanted.

This power surpassed the restraints he had experienced earlier by 200 million times. The pressure exerted on his body was so immense that an ordinary person would have been crushed by the mere aura of the area. But the onslaught wasn't over yet.

"Flash!"

Magsarion's chest was effortlessly impaled by the magic sword. Ironically, it was the same kind of power he possessed that had pierced his invincible body, which was impervious to normal attacks.

This was the ability to exploit weaknesses, multiplying and amplifying the spiritual vision inherent to the winged species-type Star Spirits. It forced fragile elements to manifest in Magsarion's seemingly impenetrable form. This was the result of Nahid's relentless "observation" of her brother-in-law.

'I'm not sure how much of this is because he is Magsarion, but it's quite remarkable.'

Therefore, even Magsarion couldn't escape sustaining significant damage. He had never fought an opponent who knew him so intimately. If the unbreakable rule of victory was to read without being read, then Nahid was undoubtedly the most challenging adversary. She knew truths that not even Magsarion himself was aware of. She knew about Magsarion's birth, of course, but she also understood the source of his anger— his deep-rooted aversion to his sister-in-law.

"You claim I am happy," Nahid remarked with a compassionate gaze directed at the black knight crucified in the air. "Yes, I am genuinely happy. I am conversing with my beloved brother-in-law. But it saddens me when he treats me so disdainfully. If you cannot wait patiently, I will grant you eternal slumber in a timeless realm. I can even sing you a lullaby if you so desire."

"Disgusting," Magsarion spat, refusing her offer as he expelled a mouthful of blood. He was not a man to sheathe his sword and retreat, no matter how dire the circumstances.

"Your songs make me sick."

"Oh, I wonder why? Your mother liked it too."

Nahid feigned surprise, amusement twinkling in her eyes. This was the crux of Magsarion's animosity towards her. While still in her mother's womb, Magsarion had been subjected to lullabies. He had no recollection of that time, but a lingering discomfort remained.

His mother, Quinn, would not have intended to torment her child. Yet, Nahid taught her the songs. No, to be precise, Nahid bore no ill will either. She simply followed the script as instructed.

"My brother deemed the child cursed, so I presented him with a gift to make him 'become' a cursed child. In other words, I am akin to his mother. Ha-ha-ha."

The root cause was Ahura Mazda, Quinn as the physical mother, and to top it off, Nahid had placed a curse upon him. It was a feeling of unease that Magsarion could never shake, a sensation that the world was a twisted place, befitting a demon's child.

"So I was curious to see what kind of sword you would become. I won't go so far as to claim it was solely due to my influence, but I am eager to witness the butterfly effect caused by the stone I cast. Now, show me. Unleash your fury. Don't hesitate to indulge your mama, alright? Be as fierce and untamed as you wish, and when exhaustion claims you, rest upon my bosom. I shall cradle you tenderly."

"You—" Magsarion's furious voice, attempting to sever his sister-in-law's delusion, failed to reach her.

It wasn't because he was silenced; rather, another voice interjected.

"That's enough, Nahid."

The wind carried the intervention of her brother. Sirius had arrived.



The initial script handed to me consisted of nothing more than a blank sheet of paper, but I didn't hesitate.



I perceived it not as an invitation to freedom, but rather as an instruction to embody complete emptiness. It suggested that we were meant to perish, yet if this attribute was bestowed upon us at birth, it could be deemed instinctive.

Similar to a fish that doesn't bemoan its inability to traverse land, we grow up devoid of any philosophy about our true selves.

After a year, I managed to stand on my own.

After three years, I consumed the same sustenance as adults.

After five years, after seven years, and so on, I physically transformed into a reasonable young girl, yet my silence persisted.

Even my countenance remained motionless, almost frozen. The people around me treated me with politeness but refrained from unnecessary interference. On the contrary, I sensed an implicit expectation to remain unchanged. Consequently, the days should have passed without alteration, save for one exception.

The boy who always tended to my unresponsiveness, grasped my hand, and cared for me persistently. The presence of this older brother, a constant companion since my birth, gradually transformed her. I began perceiving him as a nuisance. I even entertained thoughts of retaliating against him.

Whether it stemmed from my personal resentment or the script, I cannot ascertain. Nevertheless, I believed that the status quo would lead to complications, prompting me to decide to break my brother's heart.

I ignored him more thoroughly than ever before, making it evident that I had no use for him. Realizing that my brother's demeanor remained unchanged and that there seemed to be no way out, I attempted a different approach. I endeavored to engage a passerby in conversation, a few words exchanged. In the presence of my brother, I staunchly maintained silence, but to a stranger, I acted as if I was open to their interaction.

I anticipated that this would make my brother feel rejected and experience a sense of helplessness, if not sudden frustration. Yet, upon hearing the rumors, my brother became increasingly excited. He even claimed that I was on the verge of achieving something remarkable and was determined to push me further.

What foolishness, what an unfathomable being, what an incomprehensible way of existing that even terrified me. Or was it I who had succumbed to madness by perceiving it in such a manner?

I do not know. I cannot discern who is sane— my brother or myself.

I grew weary and exhausted from this torment. I even began to fear that my brother would harm me if I didn't take action. Finally, the fateful day arrived.

The moment I laid eyes on him, I realized that he was nothing like me. I couldn't quite articulate it, but I immediately comprehended his intentions. Across the expanse between the arena stage and the audience, the two shared a mutual understanding, transcending words and thoughts, and forged an unspoken contract.

"I will do what you couldn't. This is a match. Do you have any objections?"

"No, none whatsoever. If you can conquer my sister, I will accept defeat. If you succeed, let it be known."

In an exchange that surpassed sensory perception, devoid of both words and thoughts, the enigmatic boy bestowed upon me an inscrutable smile.

"I shall say nothing. I will simply let you proceed. From this point on, you are on your own."

And so it unfolded. My brother was struck down by the enigmatic boy, and simultaneously, something vital was lost. The threat that had held me captive all this time vanished, and without realizing it, I muttered to myself, "Sirius, my brother...." This marked the first time I acknowledged my brother's name. Simultaneously, I acquired a deeper understanding of myself, transitioning from an empty vessel to an individual named Nahid.

This outcome was a consequence of Sirius collapsing to the ground, a sign that the script imposed upon him had dissipated. More precisely, I intuited that it had been forcibly taken away. A world expanding through a chain reaction, a heart bursting with revelation. When Varhran took away the role of the hero, where the collective prayers of 'everyone' converged, I inadvertently learned the form and significance of my loss.

Everything converged into my heart, which had strived to remain pure and unblemished, refraining from any written script.

The truth of this world. Why was I chosen to receive divine revelation? And what about my brother terrified me?

The answer was surprisingly simple.

In the realm of absolutes, it is irrational to persist in obsessing over a sister who could be deemed a simpleton. If you are part of a family that stands at the core of the conflict between good and evil, your sole focus should be attaining victory. It is normal to cast aside relatives who serve no purpose in the war, preparing the environment accordingly. This choice represents the prescribed "good deed," a natural thought process. But Sirius was different.

With his narrow-mindedness and limited perspective, he blindly questioned, "What good am I if I cannot even make my little sister smile?"

It was as if he weighed the entire world and his sister on the same scale. It was as if he sought to transform a worthless puppet show into a genuine, spine-chilling drama. In a world where everything is full of fiction, only the elder brother is a "real" person.

He thought for himself, made his own choices, and lived according to his values. He aspired to create a future devoid of tears, cherishing the purity of the ignorant, the unenlightened, and the clichéd. He didn't merely play with words; he embodied a kindness that would remain unwavering, a sincerity that would never falter.

It must have resembled a slowly encroaching malady to others. Its subtlety made it difficult to recognize, causing those around him to be unaware or inadvertently overlook it. And when its effects spread, it became a dreaded form of heresy—the most feared kind.

Therefore, I became convinced that I was chosen to stop him. In order to impede my brother's perilous growth, 'everyone' must have collectively decided that suppressing the first step would prevent its furtherance.

As a result, despite some discrepancies, the objective was accomplished. The siblings, defeated in their match and stripped of what could be considered their core, were reborn at that very moment. If that is the case, then they must give birth to a new existence. They were now acquainted with the world, aware of themselves, and compelled to take the stage with empty hands, much like everyone else.



However, Nahid found herself perplexed, unable to discern a clear path ahead. Since losing her position and the cessation of prayers from ‘everyone,’ she struggled to find balance in her actions.

What role was she expected to fulfill?

What script was she meant to follow?

Lost in her contemplations, a beam of light pierced through the haze, bringing forth laughter.

Her brother, stripped of his most cherished possession, spun in carefree delight, showing no hint of shame as he openly admitted his defeat. He may be oblivious or disconnected, but there was an undeniable sense of innocence about him. He remained blissfully unaware of the gravity of the situation, content in his own misinterpreted way.

"You were robbed. You are no longer 'real' and have been tainted by the puppets," a voice echoed within her.

"Why, then, is this man capable of laughing alongside the usurper? It's as if they are simply borrowing and lending toys. Perhaps he unconsciously revels in the possibility of such a spectacle arising again at any moment.

It was staggering. He embodied a profound foolishness at his very core, yet it was precisely this unwavering sincerity that captivated Nahid. His directness was so striking that she couldn't help but envy him.

The dream he envisioned began to fill the void in Nahid's heart— a script titled "legend," a grand circle known as the "ideal." It conveyed to them how they should live their lives.

"Dear brother..." Nahid whispered, placing her hand upon her chest.

This time, she consciously smiled at the dawning shape of the future. As a devoted sister. As a maiden enamored with a brave hero. With an innocent voice, she sang, seeking to perform a miracle just as her brother desired. The applause and cheers cascaded like a wave, a chain reaction of joy.

Amidst the flawless celebration, Nahid realized, "This script is bound to unravel sooner or later."

She refused to underestimate her brother's idiosyncrasies, but Varhran was an enigma beyond her grasp. No matter the circumstances, Sirius, stripped of his love, would inevitably endure suffering and distort. She was acutely aware that a tempest loomed on the horizon, threatening to engulf them like fleeting specks of dust. She foresaw a fate of being cast into the desolate wilderness, tethered to a flawed and inadequate hero. Hence, this marked the inception of their demise.

Ultimately, it was Varhran who supplanted her elder brother as the destroyer, steering their ship toward an even more perilous course. Nahid, originally aligned with the side of white, felt a sense

of trepidation as she sensed the ominous path they traversed. The thought of being discarded as inconsequential at the conclusion of their world-shattering performance filled her with dread.

However, it mattered not.

Nahid no longer belonged to ‘everyone’ but to her brother. She would do anything he asked of her, for she knew he would guide her.

No matter the pain, he would rise again.

"Because you, you are the one..." Nahid's voice trailed off, her eyes teilled with unwavering faith.

"My own, my own savior."

I will always remember that you had held my hand throughout. I will forever follow my brother's lead, placing my trust in his unwavering support.



"We have awaited your arrival, my brother. Together, let us forge a new Varhran," his sister declared, her face brimming with audacity as she once again broached the topic of adultery.

Sirius dismissed her proposition with a shake of his head. "I've had my teill of such talk."

"Tell me instead, in intricate detail, what kind of flawed script you intend to create."

Nahid, undeterred by his response, wore a smile and urged him further. It was a natural reaction for her. She was merely an actor, assuming whatever role was assigned to her. Unattached to any particular allegiance, she could seamlessly switch scripts without remorse.

"If shamelessness is not your desire, then what is? Surely you are aware of Varhran's transgressions against you."

"I was oblivious to it myself," he admitted. "But given the evidence, there can be no doubt."

"Hmm, yet you do not seem angered. If you realize that your fixation on him stems from the treasure he took from you, then your heart should be filled with hatred."

"I am angry. However, my anger stems from my own blindness to his true intentions and my failure to understand him."

"So even after all this time, you still consider Varhran a friend?"

"Of course. If given the chance, I would inquire about his actions, and if necessary, I would confront him and extend my aid."

"My goodness," she remarked, unfazed by his response.

Her tone grew more animated, prompting her to ask further questions.

"But since you claim to have had enough of him, I assume your top priority is not settling scores with Varhran, is it? If that's the case, what is your current foremost objective?"

"Before I answer, allow me to ask you one thing: release Magsarion," Sirius interjected, stalling his reply and demanding the liberation of the black knight.

"Even you have qualms with him," he continued. "Do not waste your time."

"Understood, brother," Nahid complied with utmost simplicity.

She withdrew the magical sword embedded in her brother-in-law's chest, and in a puff of smoke, the restraints dissipated. Magsarion, now freed, observed the proceedings silently. He likely harbored his own thoughts regarding the exchange between the two siblings. Tension lingered in the air, but it was Nahid who broke the silence, seemingly unfazed... as if she didn't care.

Allow me to proceed with my question," she stated. "If you intend to set Varhran aside for now, do you wish to address the entanglements of the world? Perhaps challenge Nadare or acquiring the Divine Sword?"

"Futile endeavors."

"Then do you desire an abrupt withdrawal?"

"No, that is not my intention either."

"Yet you proclaim that the world is rife with flaws?"

"Yes, but there is something more important than that."

He pushed back against every proposed solution, leaving Nahid visibly perplexed.

"I fail to comprehend. Please speak plainly, brother. I shall do as you wish."

In that moment, the elder brother's response surely caught his younger sister off guard.

"I intend to bring genuine laughter to you, Nahid."

It marked the inception of the ideal he sought— a pristine dream he held dear since childhood.

"An older brother who can't make even one sister smile can't possibly change the world. I remembered the man I once was who believed that, and that was the beginning of Sirius. I believe that everything has become distorted because I lived in error without fulfilling this belief. Then, let's go back to the starting point. Otherwise, we cannot and should not move forward."

If they were to confront Varhran and the world, it would have to occur later. Sirius, innately clumsy, lacked the grand vision required to suddenly sketch a grandiose masterpiece. He knew only how to tackle small problems one by one, accumulating modest moments of happiness. It might be considered an unimpressive way of life, slow as a tortoise compared to those who danced among the heavens. Yet, he couldn't delude himself into believing it wasn't real.

Nahid's exclamation served as proof, a testament to her brother's strength. Within his perceived foolishness, in a universe where life flickered transiently, Sirius's kindness shone through, unwavering amidst shifting values. His simple and humble prayer, akin to offering a piece of bread to a hungry child, embodied an immutable good.

"Just love your neighbor before you, extend a helping hand to those in suffering," he believed.

It was only that, and yet no one but him could put it into practice even after all this time.

"I yearned to wipe away all tears, yet failed to alleviate the sorrows in the hearts of men. The heart is precious and restricting it would render us nothing more than puppets. Observing you, I am reminded of this truth. If you are sad, mourn; if you are angry, be angry. But do not drown in tears and blood."

Sirius firmly believed that as long as one harbored unwavering warmth within their heart, they could withstand any darkness and stand tall. It was merely a fleeting moment of happiness in an ordinary day— a blue sky, a refreshing breeze, memories of chasing sunsets with friends, the vivacity and warmth of a dinner table. Sirius wished for Nahid to comprehend the significance of these simple joys. Even though Nahid had grown weary of Sirius, the reality remained that she only placed her trust in the one who presented her with the script.



As long as she remained trapped in the karmic cycle of being enslaved to the script, she would remain ignorant of the happiness Sirius described. She didn't even know what it meant to be siblings. Therefore, Sirius had but one wish in that moment.

"Speak your mind, Nahid. Let us be frank with one another, annoy each other, and if need be, let us fight. What is an elder brother and a younger sister without experiencing such natural occurrences?"

In response to Sirius's candid request, Magsarion, with his fierce pragmatism, could only manage a wry smile.

In a way, he resembled Sirius— an individual who lacked a broad perspective and sought to accomplish things through short-sighted actions. Thus, Sirius understood why Magsarion laughed.

"I know what you mean, Magsarion. I am far too tainted to discuss ideals. I have traversed countless lives and must atone for my days of obscurity."

He urged Magsarion to slay them, as they had promised each other. Varhran held everyone under his grasp, especially Sirius, who stood closest to him but could neither comprehend nor halt his actions. Sirius blindly celebrated him, inadvertently leading him astray. As someone who called himself a friend, his inadequacy undeniably constituted a sin. Merely awakening to his flaws did not absolve him of his past deeds; the time for reckoning had arrived.

Magsarion possessed the right to wield the blade of absolution, and Sirius knew this, faintly smiling.

"I shall confront you head-on. If I fall in the process, I will accept it as fate."

Then, after a brief pause, he continued, his face bashful.

"May I place my hope in you? I do not wish to burden you with carrying on my dream. I only want you to convey to Varhran that, despite everything that has transpired, it has not been in vain."

"I truly did not anticipate... that you were the one," Nahid exclaimed, dismayed. "Be selfish? Let us fight? Yes, I will comply, but it is an arduous request. The directive to be selfish is somewhat paradoxical."

"I understand. However, do not concern yourself with that. I pledge never to miss a moment when you genuinely smile."

"Because I am your sister?"

"Precisely."

The magic sword encircled Nahid like a satellite, and from the air, a bulb-like object materialized, sprouting branches and leaves in a breathtaking display of rapid growth. Its purpose remained unclear, but one thing was certain—the formidable powers residing in Aka Manah were far from extinguished.

"Let us astonish him, the observer from afar, as the ones who have been swept away by Varhran."

Both Sirius and Magsarion stepped forward, joining Nahid in her chant. If the current situation marked the end envisioned by the hero, they would surpass it.

That was the sole truth to which all three of them wholeheartedly committed themselves.

## 9

It felt as though every ounce of blood coursing through his veins had transformed into a frozen aphrodisiac needle. The sensations, both cold and scorching, were obscenely intoxicating, causing his spirit to sink and soar in a twisted dance. He was acutely aware of his descent into madness, yet even in the midst of it, laughter escaped his lips, devoid of any semblance of decency.

He became a beast unleashed, charging in every direction, his explosive impulses surging through his limbs. Stripped of pride and bereft of dreams, he possessed only the ingrained techniques of destruction—a duality of depravity and salvation. How invigorating it was to be engulfed in the exhilarating bliss of liberation, to cry out and run as if it were his very purpose.

"I have suffered. I have languished for so long. I've squirmed in this state, yet hidden within was a perverse delight," he mused, grappling with his own inner turmoil.

What a wretched creature he had become.

Such shameful acts, the self-loathing he felt grew so immense that it transformed into a sickening sweetness, an addiction he couldn't bear to live without. He realized he couldn't bear to inflict pain upon himself or taste the lifeblood pulsing through his veins.

Oh, what a height of folly. He was a piece of trash so shallow and repulsive that he wanted to shield his eyes, an existence that seemed to be a cruel mistake. The present, where it was deemed acceptable to be such, was undoubtedly a blessing. He firmly believed, without a shred of doubt, that it would be best to embrace his hideousness until the end of his days, and meet the most agonizing demise.

"Therefore, I implore you. I fervently prayed to be released as I am," he pleaded.

With 28 victories, 27 defeats, and 34 draws, the numbers echoed in his mind.

Thirty-four draws.

Was that right?

But a familiar voice, incomprehensible yet strangely familiar, shattered his sense of ease. Like water poured over his head, it pulled him back to reality, eliciting an involuntary reaction within him.

"Wait a minute. Don't attempt to manipulate the numbers in this confusion. I may not care about the draws, but the distribution of wins and losses is all over the place. I may understand your confidence in mathematics and memory, but don't casually distort the facts. Are you trying to deceive me, assuming I won't answer your questions correctly? Or are you truly an incomprehensible fool?"

Yet, in the very moment he was about to unleash his fury, his reddened, clouded vision effortlessly cleared. For the first time, he truly saw her. Not only was she looking down upon him, but he even saw himself from a bird's-eye view. The first step was to assess the situation objectively.

"Ah, I see..." he muttered, falling right into the trap.

The moment one encountered the same situation for the first time, the outcome always seemed remarkable. This understanding led to another, and he arrived at an answer.

This must be what it meant to be a contender for the Nadare throne.

Everything would never go as he desired, destined to be beaten down due to his incompetence until the end of time. Gradually, anger and despair faded, leaving behind an unfathomable weariness and a sense of alienation in human form. Undoubtedly, he was spiraling down this path.

The fact that he had just missed the salvation of losing his rationality was a testament to that, and he naturally felt regret deep within. Yet, something stirred within him.

He sensed that he had been given a final chance. His body still pulsed with frenzied energy. As a fallen individual, he seethed with hostility, baring his fangs ferociously.

"I know who I am," he declared.

Trivial obsessions about past victories and losses resurfaced, rousing Ferdows from his stupor.

"I still believe I'm worthless. It's an unshakable truth that I indulged in self-flagellation, escaping the weight of guilt and helplessness. I can see now how that insidious cowardice has led me to this point."

In essence, he knew he deserved everything that had befallen him and that his actions had caused harm to those around him. It was time to do what was right.

"I will end you gently," she vowed.

He couldn't allow her to shoulder such a burden.

"You... you idiot, look at yourself," she said, her tone betraying a resolute facade. But in reality, she was a mess of tears.



For heaven's sake, she should retain her composure. It was acceptable for him to meet the worst possible fate. But he couldn't bear the thought of her suffering. If he continued on this path, he would undoubtedly become a Nadare. Yet Quinn desired to change his destiny, so she resolved to kill him.

Yes, Ferdows didn't desire to rise to the top of darkness either. However, he also couldn't bear to lose a fellow comrade with whom he had fought alongside against this absurd universe for so long. He would determine his own fate.

He acknowledged his incompetence.

He couldn't guarantee that everything would turn out fine, but he firmly vowed not to stain her hands.

Thus, she should not be disheartened. For Quinn, another battlefield awaited, one where the true enemy would be confronted. She should conserve her strength for the forthcoming moment, and he felt she should refrain from interfering with him in any way.

This was his critical moment.

He harbored aspirations beyond his own existence, and this was the ultimate battle to ascertain whether he could fulfill the smallest yet most significant flame of determination that had always burned within him.

"I want to become a hero. I yearn to be formidable," he admitted, his core desire still aflame. "I will not concede this battle."

Quinn and Magsarion, he urged them to observe. He would support their advancement, and they should be grateful.

"Hey, Ashozushta, don't you feel the same way?" he spoke, addressing the absent other, sensing a connection between their intertwined fates.

She, too, continued to fight, refusing to yield. Even though it seemed like a fleeting flicker in the wind, she still awaited the moment of recovery. In that case, they should synchronize their breaths and face the situation together.

Ferdows quietly conveyed the essence of the plan to her. In a few moments, it would be Saturday.

Let us rewrite our destiny through this.

For the ability to manifest on that day...



“Be in bloom...”

A delicate blush-colored breeze waltzed in harmony with the enchanting chant. Suddenly, countless cherry blossom petals, each as large as an island, materialized in the tens of billions, painting the sky in a mesmerizing display. But this was no act of aggression; it was a benevolent gesture from Nahid.

Understanding the plight of Sirius and Magsarion, whose Star Spirit blessings were sealed, she sought to provide them with a footing. Engaging in aerial combat without their Star Spirit's support would prove arduous, if not impossible. Aware of the overwhelming burden they would face against Nahid, she chose to bridge the gap, embracing a sense of fairness and familial connection.

Sirius and Magsarion, acknowledging the offering, received it with no trace of animosity. They channeled their entire beings into their swords, fearlessly traversing the delicate petals. Their unwavering focus allowed them to disregard the eerie resemblance between the blossoms and Mashyana's celestial form. Knowing Nahid's power to replicate such a likeness with ease, they remained undeterred. And so, the three interconnected.

The baton of battle was passed to Magsarion, who seized the moment with determination. In a flash, Aka Manah intercepted the inky streak hurtling towards the side of his head. Nahid, not wielding the magic sword physically but levitating it with her powers, evaded any disadvantage stemming from size or physical strength. Her authority and unrivaled spiritual prowess served as her weapons and armor.

But Nahid was not a frail damsel in distress. There was nothing Sirius would consider "legendary" about a being with such vulnerabilities, and that sentiment remained unaltered. Despite her disqualification, she embodied the vessel of a hero, capable of fulfilling any role demanded of her. With gentle grace, Nahid's slender finger grazed Magsarion's hand, as if offering guidance on

proper social decorum. In an instant, his towering figure, encased in armor, was sent spinning sideways. It was akin to a powerful kick striking him, yet Nahid effortlessly achieved this with just one hand, without exerting excessive force. The incredible feat resembled an air throw, a display of unimaginable martial skill.

Caught off guard, Magsarion tumbled towards the flower-laden ground, the magic sword hurtling towards him. But Sirius swiftly deleted it, saving Magsarion life in the nick of time. Yet, there was no gratitude to be found in Magsarion's heart.

His dark silhouette brimmed with fury as he lunged at Sirius, slashing with a vengeful intent. The man narrowly evaded the attack, but Aka Manah pursued, slithering through the air like a serpent.

Interceptions, evasions, counterattacks, and defenses ensued, interwoven with repeated interventions and obstructions. Three-way battles often succumb to stalemate, the result of a delicate balance after each participant makes their move. However, this conflict possessed a distinct quality. There was no room for calculated strategies, no space for clever calculations. Each side unleashed their utmost, engendering a relentless confrontation. Yet, their tactical objectives were far from uniform. Although they had agreed to cross swords, victory held distinct meanings for each combatant.

Magsarion had resolved to eliminate his sister-in-law and brother-in-law. Death stood as the sole resolution to the twenty-year-long tragedy, no other alternative held sway in his mind. The annihilation of the rotten world, the pursuit of efficiency— these were his foremost concerns. As he had informed Kaikhosru, killing one another would expedite the decision-making process, the swiftest path towards achieving his desired outcome. To him, it was merely logical and efficient, rendering words inconsequential in the face of disagreement.

On the contrary, Sirius endeavored to maintain control without resorting to killing. Despite the gravity of the situation, he remained remarkably magnanimous, refusing to sacrifice any more lives. In the wake of countless losses in the past, he harbored no intention of abandoning even the smallest blossom strewn along his path. His convictions remained unwavering, resolute in the truth he had rediscovered. Sirius aimed to embody the path of salvation, walking the hegemony in pursuit of his ideals.



Nahid's focus rested solely on her brother's contentment. While instructed to live as she desired, she found herself unwilling to comply. It was clear that she did not possess virtuous tendencies. From her perspective, deviating from the script equated to breaking a **Commandment**. She yearned to discover her true identity as an individual, distinct from her role as an actor. Though she could have accomplished this at the request of others, doing so voluntarily posed a formidable challenge.

"I am uncertain of how to convey my sincerity, but my priority now is to eliminate Magsarion"

The presence of a third party hindered her ability to confront her brother directly. She understood Sirius' desire to resolve matters without bloodshed, yet she deemed it "selfish" to request a moment alone with him.

Was this argument dictated by the script or Nahid's personal will?

The answer eluded her, but it remained her course of action nonetheless. Such was the state of affairs, a summary of the current predicament. The outlier in this intricate web was Sirius.

He stood alone in his abhorrence of bloodshed, his mentality far from exclusive even amidst battle. Consequently, the script began to revolve around him as a matter of course.

With determined strides, he moved as if attempting to seize a fleeting blade, his strike finding its mark on Magsarion's abdomen. Simultaneously, a shockwave expelled him backward. The initial maneuver lacked a raised blade, while the subsequent attack struck with the force of the air. Both techniques defied mortality yet infringed upon the Commandments of the magician clad in black, hellbent on the path to hell.

Nevertheless, no divine punishment descended upon them.

Sirius had surpassed such trifles, superseding the established law with his own radiant emanation. Within this triad, the **Commandments** lost their significance. Sirius' choice directly led to the dissolution of Nahid and Magsarion's bindings, but the objective extended beyond their liberation.

This was **Moksha**— Moksha as an actor, Moksha as a demon child.

Sirius sought to cleanse them all, guiding them towards a new world. Within a realm governed by incessant bloodshed, his beliefs presented a rational foundation, transcending the need for violence. If this trajectory persisted, the effect of **Commandments** would vanish. Nahid would

inevitably lose control of her Aka Manah, and Magsarion would relinquish the lethal edge of his sword. No alternative surpassed the ability to orchestrate the scene without the spilling of blood. Sirius, his mind clear and unclouded, channeled his thoughts into the brilliance of his blade and surged forward.

"Artal, Rostam, Rashnu, Elam, Isfan, Zayd, Azrael..." he murmured, the names flowing from his lips like a prayer.

Each name represented someone who had shared his dream, comrades who had departed from his side. He never forgot their weighty presence, nor the preciousness of their cause.

"The days when hope pulsed in our hearts, propelling us towards a world where tears would be no more... I cannot forget those days, and I refuse to let them fade, even in the depths of despair."

It transcended the Holy King's **Commandment** that dictated the hearts of all. Those bindings applied only to the living.

"Lavan, Gyal, Cayumarus, Durg, Burhan, and Qorain..."

"In the past, such sentiments were dismissed as weakness— a source of shame and self-reproach. Trapped in the relentless struggle of a callous world, I yearned to sever ties with the past, to abandon myself to shame and unscrupulousness. But now, everything has changed. I cannot discard what I hold dear. I take pride in my unwavering dedication, unable to let even the smallest fragment of memory slip away."

"Quinn, my wife... I am proud to say that I love them with all my heart. My inadequacy in accepting the loss of the departed, my inability to cope with tragedies of any scale, regardless of the detours required— I refuse to believe that these qualities are in vain. They hold meaning."

"I am a simple man, devoid of any extraordinary power, and that is perfectly fine," Sirius affirmed.

"There are things that can only be accomplished in this manner."

The manifestation of such a foolish sentiment began to weave a miracle in that very moment.

"Brother..."

Nahid was quick to grasp the unfolding phenomenon, a spectacle that left her questioning its reality. It was not a force destined to bring about destruction, but a breathtaking sight that resonated deep within her soul. The transformation she witnessed was nothing short of astonishing.

"Your face..." she began, struggling to find the right words.

Sirius, who should have aged to the point where one would find it hard to believe he was forty years old, now radiated with the vibrant freshness of youth. His once weathered appearance had given way to the innocence and purity of a young boy, his eyes brimming with untainted purity.

In essence, Sirius had been rejuvenated, but two doubts lingered in Nahid's mind.

First, it contradicted the aesthetic of despising immortality. The collective nature of their race relied on the cohesion brought about by their shared lifespan. It could be seen as a consequence of being bound by identities that were merely opposing colors, regardless of the pretenses of righteousness or wickedness. In that sense, there was no fundamental distinction between darkness and light. Therefore, it was not surprising that Sirius had entered a realm that deviated from their old values.

The issue lay in the fact that cleanliness was highly regarded among their kind. Life sparkled most brightly when one cherished its fleeting nature, burning their souls in each passing moment. Nahid found herself perplexed by the realization that the brother she once knew was a man who earnestly worshipped such ideals. However, Sirius had not abandoned his principles. It wasn't a physical transformation that made him appear youthful.

"I have something I want to share with you, Nahid," Sirius expressed, his voice carrying a tender earnestness.

"The blue of the sky, the refreshing touch of the wind, the memories of chasing sunsets with friends, the warmth and liveliness of the dinner table... I want to protect the mundane, the ordinary. If you're not aware of it, allow me to gift it to you."

That was the sole aspiration he sought to achieve, and his exposed soul took on this youthful form. It was only natural for a boy's dream, a prayer that revered the simple and seemingly insignificant happiness, to embody youth and purity.

"Everyone ages and decays, but this is nothing more than an illusion that ends there. If you inherit a light that stays the same, you will be able to get up and move forward no matter how many times you make mistakes." Sirius proclaimed, embodying this concept.

In the end, anyone who encountered him would be drawn back to their childhood, resurfacing long-lost memories and emotions. Even Nahid was no exception.

"You truly are..."

A faint tingle coursed through her, Nahid, reminiscent of the emotions she once felt when following the world's prescribed script, confessed:

"You infuriate me!"

Several seconds had already passed since Nahid had intruded upon his kill zone. If Sirius had wished it, she would have been struck down by now. But he detested the notion of not even receiving a single sword strike or the slightest touch. Nahid was also frustrated that she almost admonished him for his intentions while claiming her desire to fight. She immediately understood why.

"Is it because you're my brother? Because you're the older one? Are you prepared to tolerate all of your sister's selfishness? Very well, I'll indulge you as you wish. Don't expect me to hold back."

In response to her words, she leapt backward as a torrent of radiant beams erupted from her roaring Aka Manah. Each beam possessed the formidable power of a Star Spirit, their strength unpredictable, their trajectory unknowable. There was no means to preemptively discern their might or devise a countermeasure. Intercepting them was futile and avoiding them entirely was impossible.

Indeed, the first beam pierced through Sirius' sword and struck his shoulder, resulting in a supernova-like explosion with limited reach.

The second beam condensed into a poisonous gas, creating a lethal fog of utmost toxicity.

The third beam transformed into molten heavy metals, scorching at temperatures reaching tens of millions of degrees.

The fourth beam unleashed a torrent of electromagnetic waves, disintegrating cellular structures.

And the onslaught continued without respite, countless forms of annihilation hurled toward a solitary man.

It was inconceivable that he would emerge unscathed. He had been faced with Nahid's full power, and his destruction, leaving no trace behind, seemed inevitable. Yet, Nahid's reaction was peculiar. Her outstretched hand trembled in the air, her countenance filled with fear, resembling a lost child.

"Oh..."

"The most crucial lesson to learn is that the true measure of a life well-lived lies in cherishing its goodness," Sirius responded to his sister's confusion with unwavering resolve.

"Fear not, for this is insufficient to end my existence."

As the tempest of bullets dissipated, Sirius materialized, appearing as if he had been wounded to the very core. It was nearly impossible to believe he still stood, for his current state left no doubt about his inability to spout fearless lines.

His entire being was drenched in crimson, his torso and limbs punctured by innumerable holes caused by the relentless assault. He stood, teetering on the precipice of collapse, yet there was no trace of sorrow upon his blood-stained face. Instead, a resplendent audacity radiated from him, akin to a slender young man brimming with the vitality unique to the youth.

The unsettling smile on Sirius' face sent a shiver down Nahid's spine, filling her chest with an inexplicable sense of disgust. She couldn't fathom the reason behind her growing unease.



"I didn't do it. I wasn't told to," Nahid stammered, her words barely coherent in her confusion.

"Watch, Nahid. I will unleash you," Sirius responded, his voice carrying an air of ominous anticipation.

"No, that's not what I mean... Oh my God, what is happening?" Nahid cried out, her voice tinged with fear and bewilderment.

In response to her screams, Aka Manah surged with even greater power. The magical sword slashed through the fabric of galaxies with a wild and unrestrained momentum, its horizontal arc carrying a sense of raw ferocity. Nahid, who had been vehemently proclaiming her intent to cleave her brother in half, now looked relieved to see that he had withstood the blow as he had declared. But there was an inexplicable incoherence clouding her mind, preventing her from rectifying her conflicting emotions.

"Something is wrong with me," Nahid thought, her hand absentmindedly scratching her head as she questioned her own sanity.

Her mind was filled with noise, and she felt adrift, unable to follow the prescribed script of her role, her sense of self wavering. Yet, despite her confusion, the onslaught of attacks continued unabated. The blade of Aka Manah transformed into a spinning saw, its teeth resembling those of a voracious shark, slicing through the air with blinding speed. Unavoidably, Sirius' flesh was gouged, and the surroundings were stained with ghastly crimson spots.

"The 'big brother' wants to bring happiness to me. He won't abandon his poor little sister but lead her into a new world, right?"

Nahid heard a furious voice, soaked in her brother's blood, but she hadn't yet realized that the voice was her own.

"Yes, it's admirable. It brings tears to my eyes," Sirius replied, his voice calm and resolute.

"I'm sure it's a place where things are ordinary but warm, a place where mistakes can be made and rectified. Perhaps it might even be boring, but a place where one can stand tall. I know your preferences well, so I understand how a small love can become everlasting."

"But— " Nahid murmured, shaking her head in vehement rejection.

"Don't save me only to be someone else's savior, and then someone else's after that. Don't let it become part of the 'everyone' at the end," she continued, her words pouring out in a desperate plea. "I despise that endless cycle!"

These words revealed the depths of her heart, the sliver of her true self fighting against the constraints of the script. It was a cry of her soul, a plea that went beyond the understanding of her character.

To Varhran, she had once asked what her happiness looked like, unaware at the time that it was the voice of her essence seeking salvation amidst the chaos. But now, in her fervent desire to claim her brother's undivided attention, she found herself resorting to a childish form of possessiveness, far removed from her usual composed demeanor.

"I was the very first person brother extended his hand to. I hold the position of the beginning, the origin. Not Vahran, not 'Quinn,' not our father, not our mother, but me! I am brother's sole and irreplaceable companion! I refuse to be cast aside as if I were a mere obligation, fulfilled and discarded. I won't permit him to wander elsewhere. I would willingly remain bound eternally rather than be lost amidst the multitude just to please you. I won't relinquish my hold. I won't allow you to mock me!"

"I see. I understand what you mean Nahid."

Nahid's eyes widened, comprehension dawning as she heard her brother's subdued voice. In that moment, she finally grasped the identity of the one delivering the fervent soliloquy.

'I yearned for my brother's undivided attention,' she realized with startling clarity. 'No matter the circumstances, I refused to bestow upon him a mere smile, perpetuating an endless cycle of trial and error. For as long as I held onto that role, he would become my own savior, my own guiding light in this tumultuous world.'

To call it childish monopoly would be an understatement, but it was a startling change in light of Nahid's origins. It is exactly the kind of selfishness that is common among younger sisters who have no clue what they are talking about. From her perspective, Sirius was simply an honest and kind older brother, not a deity.

Therefore idea that he could no longer be her brother was absurd and unbearable.



‘Then, let me free him from that burden. The truth is, I chose this path of my own volition, not because anyone commanded me to...’

“Oh no... I’m not thinking...”

Contrary to her outward attempt at reconciliation, Aka Manah, having lost control, returned to its original form and descended upon the flowery earth. It was a sign that Nahid had acknowledged her true emotions deep within, and the strictures of the script were being erased by the hegemony of Sirius. In response to his trembling sister, displaying an expression that neither resembled shame nor fear, Sirius smiled with a sigh.

"You don't understand the true meaning of being siblings, do you?" he spoke, his voice now more worn but brimming with compassion.

"It seems I must start from the basics, but that's alright. Listen to me, Nahid." Sirius continued, his words carrying the weight of his struggle.

"You will always be my sister, and I will always be your brother. This bond is inseparable, special, and unchanging, but it is also a shared connection. In other words, every human connection is unique. That's what I believe, and I'm not wise enough to lump 'everyone' into a single category.”

He, as an older brother, prioritized Nahid's liberation over the fate of the world. He couldn't possibly treat people as mere quotas, one after the other. Sirius did not possess such a mindset, and even if the circle expanded limitlessly, the value of each individual would remain intact.

"So your fears are unfounded," he assured her. "I understand your anxiety, but let's not get too far ahead in our discussions. Well, I did ask you to bother me, but remember that we can only take things one step at a time."

Sirius mused to himself, leaving Nahid at a loss for words. Just as the two seemed on the verge of understanding one another, a voice as cold as steel interrupted their moment.

"Are we finished with the talking?" rang out the chilling voice.

In an instant, a black shadow tore through the flowery landscape, casting its ominous presence over them. Magsarion, who had briefly withdrawn from the frontline, returned with a frenzied intent to kill. Of course, Sirius' Law affected him as well.

The loosening grip of the **Commandments** was evident, but the real issue lay in the innocent prayer that had been invoked. The very concept of happiness for Magsarion was solely where disaster ran amok. The only way to control this man was to completely subdue him in a single move. To confront him half-heartedly would be akin to opening Pandora's box.

Sensing the foreboding nature of the situation, Nahid's psychic senses sharpened, and Sirius raised an eyebrow in response. And Magsarion, the subject of concern, embraced the winds of death with a chilling certainty.

As the magic sword soared through the air, propelled by a swift kick from Sirius, a thunderous black surge collided with him. In the midst of their intense clash, the malevolent warrior uttered a whispered curse, laden with significance.

"You are my father, right?" the words escaped his lips, carrying an unsettling revelation.

Nahid's voice trembled with a mix of shock and realization.

"He's your father," the truth resonated in the air. Nahid's brother-in-law, Magsarion, who possessed an uncanny insight, had likely pieced together this revelation long before the current events unfolded.

Clues and foreshadowing had been scattered throughout the story of Sirius and Nahid, leading Magsarion to this profound understanding. An elated sense of accomplishment surged within Magsarion. He had successfully unraveled the enigma surrounding his "older brother," delving deep into its true significance. Moreover, he now comprehended the profound implications of the ongoing battle.

"Stay away from my brother!"

Nahid, wielding her magical sword once again, unleashed a slashing laser. But her brother-in-law had vanished, leaving no trace.

"You pretended to be my mother."

Nahid's voice brimmed with a mix of astonishment and anger. However, before the shock could fully settle in, Nahid realized that during Sirius's previous intrusion, she had remained undisturbed.

It seemed inconceivable that he could slip through the vigilance of over a billion Star Spirits without any lapse in their alertness. Reality had been twisted, serving as undeniable proof that

Magsarion's understanding had delved into infinite depths. Once such comprehension was achieved, there was no escape from its grasp.

‘Ahh a perfect training ground,’ Magsarion mused, a glimmer of determination flickering in her eyes.

"Get down, Nahid!"

Sirius interposed with lightning speed. Magsarion, however, seemed unfazed, his bizarre movements defying conventional logic as he traversed the air like a spider, gripping the void with all his limbs. His actions were erratic, confounding even the keenest sixth sense, for every move he made exploited the tiniest gaps in defense.

The initial three-way battle had now shifted into a two-on-one confrontation. The malevolent intent of impending disaster resonated, for this battle had inevitably converged upon the central figure—him.

"You and I are similar, Sirius," the shadowy figure jeered, clutching his brother-in-law's sword as he retreated.

"We're both clumsy, it's probably genetic. I'll give you that."

"...What?" Sirius's voice held a mixture of bewilderment and incredulity.

A torrent of thoughts flooded Nahid's mind, as she grappled with the realization that the two combatants were not merely brothers but also father and son. Their shared name only heightened the complexity of the situation, intensifying the déjà vu that had lingered in the room for far too long.

"I see, I see," Nahid whispered, the truth finally dawning on her.

"What appeared to be a battle between brothers was, in fact, a battle between father and son."

It felt like a rehearsal for the day when Magsarion would confront Varhran and the Divine Sword, a momentous occasion she had not anticipated.

"Did he foresee this? That man, he was certain, but I never expected it to unfold like this."

A dazzling flash erupted as Aka Manah split into a thousand blades, bombarding the battlefield from above. Magsarion deftly evaded, parried, and repelled each assault, his

laughter resounding in the air. He attacked from behind, only to be expertly blocked, as if their every move was anticipated. A super-dimensional conflict ensued, without a moment's respite.

In common parlance, battles between blood relatives were referred to as "flesh and bone," but this confrontation defied categorization. They were the chosen ones, blessed by the enigmatic hero, without shame or inhibition. Unavoidably, their clash revolved around the central figure - Varhran.

"I wondered how he would exploit my brother's love, but I never imagined he would pass it on to his son," Nahid pondered, her gaze penetrating. "He resembles my brother, albeit in a much darker form. Always consumed by immediate desires, chasing fleeting satisfactions."

"I have redeemed myself, igniting the flame within you, Magsarion, yet I remain perplexed. I cannot comprehend it. If he orchestrated it all, the timeline does not align," Sirius voiced his confusion.

"Do you think my brother is capable of such logical reasoning? It would make things simpler if he were. The truth is far more convoluted. However, I have yet to ascertain the full extent of it."

Despite the fierce gale of the lethal sword ripping open Nahid's chest, she managed to regain her composure. There was a sense of purpose emanating from her, beyond mere indifference, as she casually dismissed Varhran's significance. Among all of them, she felt the least attachment to him. It was as if Nahid had already transcended into an empty vessel, except for her genuine emotions toward her brother, causing her to remain calm once more. Undoubtedly, a purpose lay hidden within her actions.

"I leave the rest for you to ponder," Nahid spoke with serenity, her expression peaceful as she commenced a solemn chant.

"Farroberg Guschnarpus Bruzenmihl... O fire of champions! I stand for justice. O miracle of judgment, descend and gather us together. Yasaaf walyo asar ratush ashat."

Simultaneously, a brilliant blue sphere enshrouded Nahid, casting a radiant glow that mesmerized all who beheld it.

Sirius gasped in awe, his body freezing in a sudden stillness. Magsarion, who had lunged forward with determination, was unexpectedly hurled backward, his trajectory propelled in the opposite direction. In that moment, it became evident that this was no ordinary occurrence.

Its nature remained elusive, shrouded in mystery. Only the imprisoned Aka Manah within its ward emitted a mournful wail, seemingly relieved by an unfathomable revelation.

"Here, I forge the realm of virtuous thoughts. Chaosnampf Buster Ahura Mazda," Nahid intoned with solemnity, her voice resonating with ancient power.

The spiritual pressure soared to unprecedented heights, transcending all limits. A cascade of Star Spirits dissolved in a sublime succession, cascading like falling dominos. As the power surged through the immeasurable depths, its sphere of influence shrank to a size smaller than the eye of a needle. Such a phenomenon defied all logic, bordering on the surreal. Even the skilled Nahid found herself unable to fully grasp its implications.

Yet, one thing remained certain— a profound truth that resonated within her core.

If the stars, celestial entities that have witnessed the birth of the universe, and whose coordinates are intricately linked to the shrouded **Age of Zero**, were united, a minuscule gateway would manifest, albeit fleetingly.

"What lies beyond that threshold?" Nahid's thoughts whispered, echoing with a profound curiosity.

‘Perchance, even we, the intrepid souls entangled in this extraordinary tale, are incapable of comprehending the answer that lay on the other side.’

## 10

"I have come here, Quinn, to bid you farewell."

In that moment, I found myself in a peculiar state of oblivion, where the world around me turned into a vast expanse of white. It was a realm where time lost its grip, and unexpectedly, I stood face to face with A-chan. Her smile held a fragile quality, tinged with self-mockery, yet she maintained her usual carefree demeanor. It was as if she had dropped by on a whim, simply because she felt like it.

Her presence felt comforting, and despite the weight of the situation, I couldn't help but treat it as a casual conversation, almost akin to a testament. With a hint of vulnerability, A-chan began sharing the truth.

"Well, to be honest, I am already halfway to death. When Nahid captured me, my sense of self was shattered, turning into a mere tool of Nahid's will. What you see before you is a remnant, a creation akin to the 'Quinn' priestess. The only difference is that my heart still beats, allowing for this simple exchange."

Her words settled upon me, and I grasped the gravity of the situation. A-chan's activation in this moment was evidence of her imminent peril, her main form facing mortal danger.

"Yes... I understand," I replied, acknowledging the predicament.

"Your presence here now signifies the urgency of your circumstances."

"Indeed, but I do not seek your assistance," A-chan assured me.

"As I mentioned earlier, this is a farewell and a piece of advice that may prove useful in the future."

It wasn't a resignation, but a determination to leave behind her thoughts for the days to come. With a cheery tone laced with resolute determination, A-chan continued to speak.

Suddenly, the contents of her words struck me with unexpected force.

While I believed I had unraveled most of the mysteries, there remained one elusive truth: the identity of the man once hailed as the hero of all, and his true intentions. Ah-chan promised to provide a clue that could guide us towards that answer.

"I have only recently become aware of it myself, and being a newcomer, I cannot claim certainty," she confessed.

"What do you mean?"

A-chan pressed on, determined to explain.

"Stars exist for countless eons, but when it comes to the Star Spirits we know, they seem remarkably young, don't you think? Only a select few possess an ego, and even their development appears too rapid. Perhaps the oldest among them is Vohu Manah, yet their age merely reaches two thousand and five hundred years at most."

My impatience subsided, replaced by curiosity as A-chan continued undeterred.

"Indeed, it is not surprising, considering the world we inhabit," A-chan elucidated. "This is a universe defined by ceaseless violence, a place where longevity eludes even the most tenacious of

creatures. You must remember that this world is not one where immortality thrives. Left unchecked, not even a blade of grass would sprout. While you have made adjustments, accepting this reality as the norm, there is a simpler explanation. This universe itself is young."

In essence, A-chan revealed that the existence of Star Spirits emerged only after the establishment of the "**Avesta**". Before that, the stars were mere celestial bodies. It lies within the depths of our being, even if we are not consciously aware of it.

"A world that existed before our collective knowledge..." I murmured, honestly admitting that such a concept had never crossed my mind.

Yet, upon reflection, it held a remarkable plausibility.

It could be likened to the restoration of an ancient edifice, a process akin to painting over an existing artwork. On the surface, the building is reborn, transformed into an entirely new form, yet the strong foundation and vibrant colors of the original structure are carried forward, retaining their essence.

Even if the Star Spirits acquired their attributes of life at a later stage, the stars themselves have existed since time immemorial. If that is the case, the influence of that prehistoric Heaven must hold significance, and their ability for teleportation might stem from their knowledge of the '**Age of Zero**' that preceded the creation of the world.

As I mentioned before, the A-chan we encounter seems to possess only a vague understanding of such recognition. However, there is a notable difference now. She has become dependent on the '**Age of Zero**', likely a consequence of Nahid's influence over her. But what does all this have to do with the enigma surrounding Varhran?

Nahid, who had a connection with Varhran devoid of personal sentiment, may be closer to the truth than anyone else, unclouded by unnecessary biases. And now, she is attempting to unveil the '**Age of Zero**' for Sirius.

"...So, you believe the answer lies there?" I inquired.

In the world outside, the singularity is on the verge of opening.

"I see... But at that time, you..."

However, I could sense that A-chan did not wish for that outcome.

“I want Quinn to discover it, to experience the '**Age of Zero**'.”

She desired my understanding of what was and what currently exists. I know it may sound harsh, but she wants me to perceive it as the responsibility of those who survive.

"But I don't want to merely be a spectator. Is there anything I can do to assist you?"

"It's alright. This is your battle," A-chan assured me.

I needed to convey what the '**Age of Zero**' truly entailed. Yet, we couldn't allow the influx of the 'other side's existence into our own. We understood that if that were to occur, it would truly mark the end. Thus, it was our duty to make the necessary adjustments.

I couldn't help but notice that the usage shifted from singular to **plural**— the responsibility now belonged to more than just one person. In that moment, a voice resonated from beside me, causing me to turn my head abruptly.

"Ferdows..."

He stood there, right by my side. I chose not to dwell on the fact that he was here, not as a fallen figure clad in darkness, but as one enveloped in light, a virtuous being devoid of any coloring.

That alone moved me to the brink of tears.

"I believe Nahid is working diligently to open the singularity. Since we can't rely on her to control it, it falls upon us to do so, right?" Ferdows remarked nonchalantly, disregarding my gaze entirely.

The actual timing wasn't all that favorable, a fact he seemed to convey with his languid manner, as if silently telling me to cease my foolishness.

“Quinn appears somewhat forlorn, but perhaps it was better for her to remain silent in this instance.”

"Enough with sentimentality. This is not the time for it."

"You're speaking that way again. You really are still a child, Ferdows," I chimed in.

"How many times have we had this conversation?"

I chuckled, tears pooling in my eyes. Seeing him again filled me with immense joy. Given the circumstances, this moment and these emotions felt like an extravagant luxury, bordering on the



miraculous. But none of that mattered. The simple fact that we could see each other again in this manner was enough for me...

Whether my choice to kill in order to save Ferdows was merely self-serving or not, he stood before me now as a friend.

"Thank you... sincerely," I whispered.

Yes, that was the gist of what I needed to convey. The physical aspects would be handled by Magsarion, who was currently engaged in battle. I entrusted it to him.

"Yes, I'm certain he will handle it well. I trust him to make the right decision."

We nodded in agreement, and then I posed a question to Ferdows.

"Why Magsarion?"

To seal the singularity, in other words, it meant ending Nahid's existence. It was clear that entrusting Magsarion with this task was the only way to rid of her. But wasn't there someone more suitable for the job?

"I believe Sirius are just as capable as Magsarion," Ferdows replied. "In fact, if we are aiming for a better outcome, he is the rightful savior."

But why?

I couldn't fathom why both of them were so certain of Magsarion's victory. Ferdows merely chuckled in response, but A-chan was different. She walked over to me, stood on tiptoes to reach my height, and gently placed her hand on my head. Then, with a tender pat and a soft admonishment, akin to scolding a foolish younger sister, she uttered, "He's 'Quinn's' son. It's only natural to believe in him."

Such a relationship, one that I myself can hardly comprehend, as if it were common knowledge.

"I mean, it's 'Quinn's' responsibility to claim custody of the Divine Sword and to restore him. This isn't a mere jest, mind you. It's all part of the intricate plot."

"...Are you suggesting we shouldn't burden Sirius with the most troublesome part?"

"The crucial thing to remember is that Magsarion isn't the only one capable of accomplishing this. The paramount aspect to bear in mind is the fact that the universe was created."

In truth, I finally mustered the courage to express my agreement.

“I, too, share the same sentiments. Please understand that I don't intend to undermine the righteousness of Mr. Sirius. I can affirm that his ideals and kindness are undeniably exceptional and a treasured light. However, if we are to achieve a truly remarkable resolution, Magsarion is indispensable. It is my instinct, or rather, my experience as a Divine Sword, that convinces me of this. The meaning behind this will soon become evident.”

A-chan nods emphatically in my direction and then turns her attention to the other remaining individual.

"It's about time," she urges, prompting Ferdows to release a resolute sigh.

"I have one thing to tell you", he begins.

Raising his right hand, he proclaims, "I am the one who emerged victorious twenty-eight times."

He playfully taps his finger against my forehead. I can only respond with a bewildered,

"Oh..."

Though it was a gentle touch, I could feel the warmth of his finger. The crucial thing to remember is that the greatest triumph in life is being a good person. The fact that he chose to defy his own **Commandments** and will inevitably fall again is insignificant. I was simply overwhelmed with joy, so much joy that my mouth moved on its own accord.

"I've won twenty-eight times too!"

"No, you're mistaken. I have only lost twenty-seven times."

"Me too!"

I was determined not to back down, for as long as we engaged in this playful banter, I could continue conversing with him.

“Please don't go, I don't want you to leave.”

As I cry, embracing them tightly as they fade away, A-chan wears an anxious expression. Ferdows appears crestfallen, hunching over.

Both of them are my cherished, irreplaceable friends.

I knew it would be sinful to cling onto them, and I knew it was impossible to do so, yet I couldn't bear the thought of parting ways.

"You will always be with me, and you will forever reside within my heart."

"You know how I despise uncertainty, and I refuse to be caught up in this mess." They reassured me not to worry.

A-chan then proposed, "Why don't we consider the match between Quinn and Ferdows as a preliminary round for a five-way battle? I will be the referee for the rematch."

"If that's the case, then I have won an additional match this time. Don't forget that."

The little spirit smiled and dissolved into the radiance as if melting away.

"Wait, wait, please--"

Though their physical forms had vanished from my embrace, only their warmth lingered. I held onto it, weeping ceaselessly.

It was a fleeting moment, equivalent to eternity, just before the curtain rose on the battle that would truly be mine.

I sobbed, overwhelmed by both tenderness and cruelty, in the gentle yet unforgiving backstage, contemplating the impending storm of shame and brutality.

Clutching onto the dream of the grand cycle and what lies beyond its end.

## 11

In the vast expanse, there exists a profound void, an abyss that plunges endlessly into darkness and depths unfathomable. Within this void, a forgotten history reveals itself, a tale erased from the annals of time. It is here, in the **Heaven** known as the '**First Heaven**', that a glimpse into the adjacent '**Age of Zero**' becomes possible, a realm too distant for subsequent **Heavens** to reach.

Amidst the scenery portrayed within this realm, a story of escalating warfare unfolds. The hues of blood and fire mingle, embroiling the combatants in a maelstrom of rage, hatred, and fear.

If one were to merely observe the normalized conflicts, they would find little difference from the present age. Yet, a distinct disparity exists, or rather, a significant absence.

In the '**Age of Zero**' the concept of 'death' eludes those who engage in battle. They may suffer cuts, burns, and be reduced to dust, but they do not meet their demise. Death evades them. Though plagued by old age, sickness, and lacking regenerative abilities, they inhabit a strange realm of anguish, denied the solace of eternal rest.

It is a hellish existence, a final decree where all things writhe in eternal torment and wander without respite.

They are alive, trapped in a world where what should normally inspire hope has transformed into a horrifying curse that engulfs all. They fight with fervor, as if possessed, or perhaps on a pilgrimage in search of death's embrace.

Soon, the myriad of disjointed thoughts and factions coalesce into several major camps.

Some strive to break free from the curse of immortality.

Others seek to conquer and ascend to a higher form of existence.

There are those who have relinquished their hopes in this mad world and yearn to depart to another '**Heaven**'.

Between them, the grandest and final war is waged.

Although their individual objectives diverge, the means by which they seek to achieve them clash with one another. They yearn to reach the "**Land of Beginnings**" to venture towards the origin of the universe, tainted by a deformed reason.

They aim to overcome, possess, or create a breach through which they can pass. For it is believed that reaching the beginning and the end would grant fulfillment of their deepest desires. With such conviction bestowed upon them by the One, there exists no room for hesitation.

Thus, competition ensues as they vie for the coveted first place. Countless others scatter across the universe, destined to perish and turn to dust. Yet, the immortals press on relentlessly. They sacrifice themselves in their relentless pursuit, until they reach a stage where they entrust their hopes to six young men and women who emerge amidst the chaos of battle.

Though divided into opposing sides, they are, in a sense, comrades-in-arms. Each one of them a true hero, the epitome of their time.

"Mitra, Arya, Sakra, Savitr, Vivas, and [REDACTED]"

After tremendous sacrifices, they arrive at the "**Land of Beginnings**", where they make contact with a formidable being. In that moment, everything is decided, everything concludes, and everything commences simultaneously.

Faced with the incomprehensible nature of existence, only Mitra manages to retain her sanity. Paradoxically, it is also Mitra alone who descends into madness.

"...!"

An exclamation devoid of words escapes Magsarion's lips. Furthermore, he feels as if he is being reconstructed into something else entirely. He had previously encountered the practice of reshaping another's existence through ceaseless prayers in the hegemonies of Varhran, Kaikhosru, and Sirius. However, this was unlike any conquest where power and prestige coerced submission. It differed fundamentally from the notion of superior subjugating the inferior, which governed their Laws.

‘What, then, is it?’

The answer eludes him. No words or concepts can capture its essence. All Magsarion intuits is that the power that pervades the universe emanates from this unfathomable source.

During the ‘**Age of Zero**’ when they first encountered **Naraka**, Mitra devised the Divine Throne that now endures. She understood that failure to do so would result in its devouring everything. Hence, all that follows, everything that transpires, is built upon this power.

"Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh!"

As Magsarion's own stability crumbles, his comprehension of the truth accelerates. Sirius likely experiences a similar state, but there is no time to dwell on such trivial matters.

‘I am almost there. In just a few more moments, I will have a complete answer. Not even a moment has passed since I was confronted with the singularity, and yet **Naraka** has begun to invade me to the core, but I don't care.’

“More, more, more!”

Magsarion plunges deeper into the depths of the '**Age of Zero**' as if beckoning the conclusion. Fear and hesitation have long vanished from his being. It is too late for sensitivity and indecision to impede his resolve to prevail, even at the cost of his own demise.

Therefore, Magsarion envisions two possible outcomes. Either he will exhaust himself first, or he will uncover the truth of the '**Age of Zero**' before succumbing. Whichever fate awaits him, there is no chance of returning.

Yet, as someone who lives to fight, he is forever prepared to make his own choices. His philosophy stands resolute, an unassailable argument with no critics to challenge it. If only he had fought solely for himself. He harbors no grand aspirations or desires for fame. However, Magsarion finds himself no longer in a position to act selfishly.

There are those who wish for his safety and return to life, relying on his continued efforts. Though it may seem like a form of restraint, it is an outcome born from the way he has lived his life.

Thus, he has no grounds for complaints.

"I saved you from a perilous situation, even against your will. If you wish to be rid of your debt, do me this favor, Magsarion."

As the singularity vanishes without a trace, Magsarion is left with no choice but to accept that he inadvertently lost the upper hand.



Sirius emerged from a state of profound dissociation, unsure whether the haze that had engulfed his consciousness was fleeting or eternal. But as his senses returned, his first instinct was remarkably typical of him: he called out, "Nahid!"

It was his sister. Rushing towards her, lying amidst a bed of flowers, Sirius knelt down and enveloped her in a tight embrace. As he caught a glimpse of the expression on Nahid's face, his belief in himself was reaffirmed, yet a sense of his own limitations also washed over him.

In a world where he had to weigh his sister against the entire world, he would choose her without hesitation. Both held equal importance to him, and he took immense pride in saving both. There was no vanity or calculation in his actions; his true emotions lay bare and unregretted.

In essence, he was content. The distinction between those who persevered and those who succumbed lay in this singular point.

"I have lost," he murmured to himself, feeling the cold steel of the sword pressed against his back.

This was reality, an inescapable truth he could not fight against. He turned to the man who had been his adversary, a man who, like him, had traversed the depths of '**Zero**' and faced his own personal crisis. However, Sirius had awakened just slightly ahead of his opponent, and the outcome hinged on two crucial factors.

Magsarion continued to descend further into the singularity until he was on the verge of vanishing, while Sirius took a step back. His fundamental nature rejected the notion of conflict, and he prioritized caring for Nahid upon awakening, exposing a fatal vulnerability. Though he possessed the advantage of waking earlier, he could not leverage it strategically. It was an inherent aspect of his being, never considering such tactics in the first place.

"This is what Varhran likely intended to convey. He was perhaps telling me, 'Your innocence will be your downfall.'"

However, Sirius believed he had made the right choice. He clung to his sister, his pride emanating through his words.

"This is who I am. I am the man who once lost everything and regained it. I believe in this conviction with even greater certainty now. I will not compromise, and I cannot become anything other than what I am."

The reply he received was short but carried an immense weight. "As a result, you will die here. You have no choice."

It was a natural response, considering the multitude of lives that would be sacrificed for Sirius' sake. Nevertheless, as Sirius had declared earlier, he was a different person who would reach the other side. His satisfaction with his decision was undeniable.

"If I were greedy, I would wish to reach a world where everyone could be saved in my own way. I entrust the task of arranging it to you, Magsarion."

"I have no desire to inherit someone else's dream."

The black knight's grip on his sword tightened, exuding a malevolence that reverberated in his guttural snarl.

"I shall devour your foolishness and offer it as a sword to my brother," he threatened.

"If you fall, inform Varhran that I have taken up the mantle entrusted to you before this battle commenced."

Did Magsarion, in a circuitous manner, accept Sirius' wish, entrusted to him before the battle's commencement?

"Farewell, my other brother and father."

Sirius uttered with a grimace, feeling a sense of peace filling him despite the pain. Simultaneously, Aka Manah shattered. Magsarion's sword had not made contact with the seventh Demon King, but it was an inevitable consequence for an entity born as an embodiment of Sirius' fading light. The Star Spirits comprising the magical blade were reduced to dust, signifying the fate that awaited other lives.

"How much longer will you lie in bed?" Nahid, still held protectively by Sirius' lifeless body, opened her eyes.

"Did you know?"

Magsarion remained silent, prompting Nahid to continue her inquiry.

"The first thought that crosses my mind is that when a woman wears a bikini, you already know she'll be wearing one. But, yes... I want to ask you something. Was I smiling?"

He offered no response.

"Can I assume that my brother was satisfied? That's what you meant, right?"

"I don't know," he finally replied.

Nahid observed, "You truly understand what you're doing. If you were uncertain, you wouldn't have allowed Sirius to die so needlessly. You claimed to have exhausted your power, didn't you?"

"No, he did not. The singularity closed because some fools interfered in the process. It was an unexpected turn for both you and me, but I'm certain it left you with some residual energy."

"Just like you are standing here now?"



"Both of us are. And there's only one possible reason for your silence."

In other words, Nahid, too, found satisfaction. The first thing she witnessed was her awakened brother rushing to her side, and the overwhelming joy of that moment left her speechless.

"I must have been smiling..." Nahid whispered, allowing the prayer to seep into her soul. "I was naive to doubt my own judgment and seek your approval. If I'm no longer the actor, then it's my responsibility to decide with sincerity. So, what shall we do? Shall I avenge my brother here? No... let us depart quietly. I apologize for involving you in this selfish brother-sister conflict."

Nahid fulfilled Sirius' wishes, becoming the sister he had promised her. They had weathered quarrels and reconciliations, shared trivial yet significant memories. She discovered what true happiness meant. If Sirius were to perish at the end of it all, she wanted to be his martyr. Her brother might have been angry, but she cared not for his reprimands. She had her own convictions and didn't require guidance. From the moment she laid eyes on him, she knew he was a good man.

"I wish you and Varhran all the happiness in the world, and may you two find solace in being family. I doubt anyone else could understand him as deeply as you."

Finally, she conveyed her heartfelt wish.

"Please lay me to rest beside my brother." And with that, she was at peace with that simple, sincere desire, not one born of the script of reality, but one made by her own unwavering conviction.

"Very well, I accept. You, too, shall be one of the ■ I consume."

The sword of cruelty swung down upon the meditating Nahid. Her head fell, releasing a fresh cascade of blood that rolled onto Sirius' chest. The innocent, selfish little sister found her final resting place in her brother's embrace.

## 12

The world plunged into darkness, enveloping everything in its ominous embrace. Normally, such a spectacle would signify our departure from reality, a surrender of our consciousness. But in this instance, I came to a different realization.

I had just been immersed in a surreal, white world moments ago. Thus, I understood that the phenomenon of darkness was, in fact, its antithesis. By the time I awakened from the dream, I would have to witness the outcome. It was my duty to do so, to rise and press on.

Summoning all the strength in my limbs, I pried open my heavy eyelids and confronted the moment that awaited me, my destiny. Finally, I regained consciousness, finding myself lying face down on the training ground. Gritty sand filled my mouth, causing me to cough and choke. My entire body ached, wracked with pain from head to toe. Every fiber of my being screamed in agony. Yet, amidst the torment, I knew that focusing on my personal suffering was not the priority.

“Where are you Ferdows... answer me...”

I needed to find Ferdows, to ascertain what had become of him.

What had transpired after the curse of the Nadare befell him? What had happened to him being assimilated with the ‘**Age of Zero**’?

These were pressing questions that demanded answers, matters I could not afford to overlook. Despite my injuries, I limped forward, propelled by a resolute determination. My vision remained blurred, restricted, and murky. Yet, as far as I could discern, there was nothing extraordinary in sight. But there was always something hidden, waiting to be revealed.

It was meant to be a message left by my comrades, a glimpse into the future. It mattered not if it were a mangled corpse or a ghastly sight. I cared not for its grotesque appearance. If we were to succumb to half-heartedness and cowardice, we would fail to honor their resolve. What truly terrified me was the possibility of finding nothing. The thought of squandering the precious sacrifices I had made and aimlessly wandering, consumed by impatience, frightened me. It would resemble the actions of an addict, unable to find solace. In truth, I longed for a dozen potent narcotics at my disposal. If only I could rid myself of the pain that disrupted my concentration and sharpen my mind. I would not hesitate to embrace such a remedy.

So please, let me unearth substantial results from this arduous search with utmost haste.

I walked with an insatiable desire, so consumed by it that I was taken aback when caught off guard and stumbled, collapsing to the ground. As I surveyed my surroundings once more, I beheld a gruesome scene.

The area lay in ruins, cracks spider-webbing in every direction. Amidst the rugged landscape, where the reddish-brown bedrock asserted its dominance, one peculiar feature caught my attention. Approximately five meters ahead, something glittered and emitted an eerie glow. It might have been a rare earth element from the strata, but an inexplicable intrigue compelled me to crawl closer. The object that materialized before my eyes defied any attempt at description. What in the world was this?

At first glance, it appeared mineral-like, yet I had never encountered anything like it before. Its color alone was extraordinary. One could liken it to a rainbow, but instead of seven hues, there were dozens, interwoven and layered in a complex and bewildering manner. Moreover, its shape appeared to defy the laws of physics, its structure a haphazard yet orderly amalgamation of various geometric blocks, as if an insane savant had pieced together a three-dimensional puzzle from another dimension's rules. It existed at the furthest reaches of mystery, where intellect and reason diverged irreconcilably. Labeling it as good or bad was futile, for our human scales and concepts held no relevance. It simply existed as an unknown. Yet, even in its unfathomable nature, an instinctual understanding settled upon me — it was meant for me.

Its size, similar to that of a human head, its geometric body expanding and contracting as if it were breathing, the kaleidoscope of colors punctuated by blinking holes resembling eyes. I recognized the gaze within those eyes...

"Ferdows."

Somewhere in the distance, a beast howled. I realized it was my own cry, yet I couldn't suppress it. If I did, every fragment of my identity would shatter.

How had I been so foolish?

Was this the price of delving into the '**Age of Zero**'?

Did any semblance of truth exist in this distorted world?

Yes, I knew deep within that it must be so. Against my will, a deluge of information washed over me, revealing a growing comprehension. I am aware now. At least, in the immediate aftermath of this transformation, when the truth from the other side floods my senses, a connection has been established. Thus, the moment of reckoning has arrived.

To save Ferdows, I have no choice but to end him here. I mustn't be swayed by sentimental nostalgia; a crucial decision awaits me. If I fail to fulfill my responsibility, he will become a Nadare. I must execute this with unwavering resolve, displaying the sincerity of my vow to forge ahead, unafraid in the face of any tragedy.

"I shall lead you to an irreplaceable... an irreplaceable... grand conclusion!"

My trembling fist quivered in the air. As blood, different from that of a human, dripped from my clenched hand, it fell upon Ferdows, carried by the wind. It was as though he, too, wept. Moistened by my unique blood, his polar-colored eyes softened tenderly.

"I will not be slain by your hand."

Just as I was about to bring my fist down, tears streaming, I thought I heard Ferdows' voice—neither spoken nor thought. In that fleeting moment...

"Step aside. He is my prey."

Magsarion appeared unexpectedly, scooping up Ferdows from the side.

"Hey, wait. That's—"

"Silence. This is not your place."

Although his response carried a frigid and stern tone, a strange uncertainty flickered in his gaze.

Did Magsarion already know of his true nature?

As I pondered this, unable to take another step or entertain any second thoughts, a fragile sound reminiscent of a pebble shattering reached my ears. Instinctively, I glanced downward, only to reconsider and look ahead.

No matter how sorrowful, arduous, or devoid of humor, I must press forward, always focusing on what lies ahead. To do otherwise would tarnish Ferdows' victory.

Yes, he had emerged triumphant, defying the destiny I, of course, had foreseen. It is an undeniable feat, one I will embrace, ensuring that the next time we meet, I won't be disappointed to find him on the wrong side.

I will proudly declare my own victory, assuring him that I, too, have fought my battles.

Simultaneously, applause and cheers rained down from the heavens.

The scenery contorted and crumbled in sync with the uproarious exclamations, signaling the entrance to the Fractured World of Nadare. It foretold that the two of us, the last remnants, would be summoned to the end of it all.

## Chapter 15: Transmigration of Good and Evil

### 1

*(What follows is a vision Quinn sees as a result of the pressure from Nadare's Fractured World, the raw Japanese did not really specify the change in perspective, so it is quite hard to understand what is going on until you read the full section.)*

I was summoned to the Fractured World of Nadare, but by the time I realized it, chaos had already erupted, and I couldn't help but feel I had arrived late to the game once again. As the rearrangement work grew more extensive, it generated a corresponding repulsive force, naturally affecting the smaller beings caught in its vortex. I, too, was just one among many.

The impact of the Fractured World overwhelmed me, causing me to lose consciousness and arrive tardily to this battle of worlds. It was a familiar scenario, as I had grown accustomed to this reasonable reality given my abilities and accomplishments. However, that didn't mean I was content with it.

As a member of the **Ashavans**, I harbored a deep-seated hatred for evil. They were repugnant individuals, a bunch of cowardly and unskilled people who, no matter how many times they were defeated, resurfaced like maggots, shamelessly relying on forming cliques. I refused to be defeated by them.

With this singular thought in my mind, I engaged in combat, finding solace in the sheer numbers of these weak pests that assailed my soul. I desired to crush and obliterate them, leaving no trace of their existence. It was my belief that I was destined to accomplish this feat. Despite numerous failures, I consistently rose to the challenge, hoping that the next attempt would be the victorious one. Consequently, even in this instance, the path I was aiming for had been predetermined. I

needed to execute a decisive act. Although I lacked the power to obliterate their entire group, I could identify a vulnerable point and strike it.

I swiftly realized that the battlefield was not the ideal place for me. The appearance of the Fractured World was still in disarray, lacking an orderly interception posture. Thus, I perceived an opportunity to seize. As far as my knowledge went, aside from Nadare, there were only two Black Kings remaining. Furthermore, four or five of their close associates still lived, all possessing the power to annihilate stars. Naturally, the Star Spirits of this realm should have reached their limits. That was the moment to strike.

Irony arose from my inferiority as an individual, for I could predict their actions. Whenever a group of self-proclaimed weaklings, who even took pride in their weakness, gathered, there would always be a fool intoxicated with notions of self-sacrifice and the like. In the name of the greater good, a new Star Spirit was bound to emerge. Whether hastily prepared or previously arranged with special modifications, it would be subjected to tremendous strain, akin to a sacrificial offering. This wicked choice could be made in their intoxicated state.

As a result, I deemed it necessary to end this charade. I resolved to eliminate the candidates for the Star Spirit, severing the lifeline on which they relied. Having been made a fool of for all these years, I was determined to bring an end to this protracted battle.

Filled with a relentless desire to kill, I charged onto the battlefield, embracing my role as a pawn in the king's hand. Yet, I refrained from succumbing to immediate greed, knowing that it would obscure my true prey.

I wanted to take pride in the fact that I, born in a world without wings, crawling through the mud, surpassed anyone else. Guided by my purified and sharpened sense of purpose, I infiltrated the castle like a gust of wind. I became akin to a hound dog, driven by bloodlust, yet remaining cool-headed and methodical like a machine. Given that my primary objective was assassination, I needed to maintain a low profile. I had been warned to be cautious of the "vassal," said to possess power comparable to the highest-ranking figures.

In such circumstances, a frontal assault was impossible, necessitating patience until an opportune moment arose. Amidst the chaos, I knew I had to seize the moment when an opening presented itself. To achieve this, I had to first identify my prey and maintain a safe distance.

Carefully and boldly, I continued to advance, cling on the ceiling until I finally sighted my target—a child. The child appeared lost in a dream, yet simultaneously transcended mere naivety. Her attire, her presence, and the presence of several guards affirmed that I had indeed found the right person. If we eliminated her, victory would be assured.

I had never experienced anything resembling luck, but at that moment, I silently expressed gratitude to a higher power. My heart raced ceaselessly as I witnessed the glory that lay just within reach. Or so I thought, but perhaps it was a mistake.

The child turned her head, seemingly bewildered, yet her gaze penetrated the darkness, sensing my presence.

"Who are you?", she asked, and I had no time to waste.

Everything seemed to slow down. The child's mouth opened, her hand pointed at me, and I screamed simultaneously.

"Death!"

I launched myself from the ceiling like a bullet, closing in on my target. I intended to catch her off guard with an unexpected attack. There was still hope. The reaction of the guards was delayed, providing ample time to sever the child's head.

Later, I would meet my demise, but at that moment, it held no significance. I pursued the dream I refused to abandon, regardless of how many times I had failed. I longed to become a hero, to witness a new world.

Within the stretched-out time, a peculiar voice reverberated in my mind.

**"Let me ask you, what is the new world you desire?"**

In the next instant, a scorching heat, akin to a thunderbolt, pierced my chest.

"Bushyasta!"

Only after I was impaled on the wall like a specimen did I realize I had been struck by a flying sword.

"What the hell... It's not merely a sword."

I stood there, my power shattered, realizing that the blade that had impaled me was not a mere sword but a cursed blade, condensed into the form of a sword by the white delusion. It was as if it existed solely to eradicate us, the black ones. The name of that mute steel echoed in my mind, and I thought I had heard it before.

"I apologize, Lanka. I was caught off guard."

"You're lucky to be alive. It was a close call."

The man who had thrown the sword appeared, strolling leisurely as he mocked the guards. The woman rushed to the child, still dazed, and embraced her.

She whispered, "I'm relieved you're safe, Bushyasta... Are you hurt?"

"Yes, I am. Are Mother and Father hurt?"

"We're fine, my dear. We came here because Madurai wanted to see you one last time."

"Lanka, please, don't do this," the woman pleaded.

"One last time? What do you mean, last?" Bushyasta asked, bewildered.

"I wanted to put an end to this foolish exchange that started by ignoring you, but I can't. I feel my consciousness fading," Lanka admitted, his voice trailing off.

"She is still alive. You're not going to finish her off, are you?"

"We don't have time for this little fish. I and Madurai have to defeat the Black King. You guys will take care of Bushyasta as planned. This time, be on your guard".

"I will risk my life to lead your daughter to the throne of the Star Spirit."

And they left. I was the only one left, abandoned and alone.

As my consciousness faded, the sound of my heartbeat grew distant. I realized that I had failed once again, and a wave of unbearable reality crashed upon me. I couldn't even muster the strength to call out to Lanka as he sheathed his sword and walked away, completely ignoring me. Left alone, abandoned, and consumed by my own inadequacy, I felt like I was losing my sanity.

Amidst my shame and rage, I heard the mysterious voice once more. It seemed to laugh at me, mourn for me, toy with me, or perhaps even try to save me from my despair.

**"What kind of world do you desire? What is the shape of the future you envision?"**



It might have been a mere hallucination, a question posed by my dying consciousness. But I couldn't ignore it. Even in the final moments of my life, I wanted to bear witness to who I truly was.

"I don't know," I replied, my voice hoarse yet filled with a burning dream.

"I don't care about the specifics of victory. But I believe there is something beyond this place. Otherwise, it would be dull. We've fought and fought, died and run for so long. It would be too much to expect the scenery to remain the same. It doesn't matter where we end up. I don't care if it's a future where we all perish or a peaceful one. I just want change itself."

**"You mean that change is what you desire?"**, the voice echoed.

With my consciousness as the only witness, I nodded. The hero I aspired to be wasn't the all-powerful conqueror burdened with everything. That kind of arduous task could be left to someone else. Instead, I wanted to play an essential role, an irreplaceable piece that would enable others to achieve greatness. I yearned to fulfill that role and be recognized for it, to feel proud that I had contributed significantly, even if I wasn't in the spotlight.

"It's a lowly prayer."

**"And what's wrong with that?"** the voice responded, a mixture of interest and disappointment.

Nevertheless, I shook my head without fear.

"Let it be said that the world would not have changed without the concept of 'me.' That is the only answer to your unwavering determination in the face of any reality."

In that moment, I forgot the pain, and a newfound vitality surged through my body, defying the impending death that loomed over me. I had unknowingly become entangled within the gears of fate.

**"Fascinating. I've never witnessed anything quite like this. Perhaps this unique color is the perfect sensation,"** the voice muttered something unintelligible, bestowing its blessing with a touch of disdain.

**"I shall make you the next Nadare."**

As my vision faded into darkness, I awoke in an unfamiliar place, surrounded by emptiness. The universe reversed, turning my world upside down. Confusion overwhelmed me, and I couldn't help but exclaim, "What in the world is happening?!"

"Nothing, as you can see, this is how the world works," the blade which once pierced me replied, sighing like a human, a different tone than the Godly demeanor that wracked my being.

Since that moment, for over two thousand years and counting... I have been known as the Demon King, Nadare.

## 2

When I was summoned to Nadare's Fractured World, I had a realization that convinced me of the irrevocable completeness of the situation, leaving no path of retreat. Yet, there was no cause for dismay. While it held true that the initial move had been made, I found no dissatisfaction in the unfolding events. In fact, I dare say they were progressing precisely as intended.

Rising to my feet, disregarding my injuries, I cast my gaze once more upon the surroundings. This was the palace of destiny, Nadare's abode, the battlefield where the ultimate clash between good and evil would transpire.

The walls and floors, devoid of any trace of dust, melded sharp edges with sleek contours, their composition even defying recognition. Truly, a distinct aspect, yet the potent memory of the Divine Sword resonated, indicating my past encounters with this place. I had traversed these hallowed halls on numerous occasions before.

With the aid of my newfound knowledge, I could surmise something important.

Standing within this open corridor, the utmost priority lay in maintaining an airtight seal. The concept behind its construction revolved around the inherent danger of failing to separate the inside from the outside, so "this ship" possessing technical resilience against the vacuum of space.

Evidently, the trajectory of civilization diverged significantly from our own, predominantly founded upon the blessings of Star Spirits. The implications derived from these observations were plain to see.

This was a relic of the '**Age of Zero**'.

Magsarion, who, like me, had been transported to this place, emitted a low groan of realization. Undoubtedly, this place had come into existence long ago.

Why did it persist? Why did it become Nadare's fortress?

Why did she choose to employ it, designating it as the final stage?

Numerous mysteries still lay shrouded in obscurity, but their resolution was imminent. No room remained for doubt.

"Follow the path. I await you in the chamber beyond," a woman's voice rang out with an air of anticipation.

This, too, was an advanced technological system from another world. Nadare, the oldest Demon King, possessed an unrivaled understanding of the world's truths, second only to the Divine Sword. With her summons, there existed no reason to hesitate, and so we proceeded, adhering to her instructions.

The chamber we eventually arrived at revealed a space reminiscent of a theater, albeit slightly disheveled.

"It may be a tad untidy, but I find solace in this place. Hang your weapons wherever you please," the figure seated upon a peculiar, levitating chair cheerfully encouraged us.

"This was the very chamber where I had parted way with the Divine Sword. It was also the site of the clash between the preceding heroes and Nadare. Although I had no intention of blindly adhering to tradition, it seemed fitting to do so once again".

The strange woman, draped entirely in black and white, raised her right hand, seemingly deeper than the abyss, and offered a smile. Simultaneously, her left hand, radiating a brilliance surpassing that of light itself, revealed an eccentric weapon. The weapon took on an S-curve shape, as if two pairs of scythes had been conjoined at the hilt, their wings extending in opposite directions. The blade of this sword bore the hues of darkness and light, cloaked in black and white, respectively.

"But before we commence, let us discuss something else. In a grand assembly such as this, it is imperative for both parties to understand each other, wouldn't you agree?"

Nadare inquired, prompting a nod from me, while Magsarion silently affirmed his consent. Nadare accepted this and placed her weapon upon a pedestal beside her. Her words and demeanor made it

evident that an immediate commencement was not her intention. Nevertheless, this was no adversary to be taken lightly. Even in this face-to-face encounter, it felt as though my very thoughts were being constricted, squeezed within the recesses of my mind.

Does the title of "Nadare" carry a regal air, embodying the laws of the universe divided into shades of black and white?

Or does it embody a rebellion against the very fabric of karma?

Though our conversation had yet to begin, I was beginning to gain a glimpse into the peculiar nature she bore.

"You are..."

I muttered unintentionally, causing Nadare to narrow her right eye, where the cornea and conjunctiva had been inverted, as she scoffed to herself.

"Well, you're not wrong. You've likely deduced by now that vanquishing Nadare would trigger a Great **Collapse**, haven't you? I'm just a mere spectator who missed out on 'everyone's' grand festivity. Technically speaking, the same can be said for Ahura Mazda, but she's privy to the entire script. I'm the sole outcast who remains truly excluded."

"Then you will forever be shrouded in the colors of the black?"

"I couldn't change when my former comrades crossed over to the other side, and those who were once my adversaries joined the opposite side. Perhaps I've never experienced a more significant setback than this. Depending on one's perspective, I could be regarded as the most spectacular Collapse ever witnessed," Nadare confessed, her tone light, yet emanating an immeasurable desolation.

"Curiously enough, **Collapse**'s on a smaller scale often occur at the turning points of time. Prior to my assuming the mantle of Nadare, I had heard of one such **Collapse** that transpired over 2000 years ago, and the most recent one being Aka Manah. They served as steppingstones for selecting new candidates. As you astutely pointed out, Nadare is a title bestowed upon those left behind dyed with black, and if a candidate emerges from the white, a transformation must precede their ascent."

In that case, the calamitous point remains the same. It offers no solace, for your friends will eventually return to you. If we must endure a temporary **Collapse**, only to rise again, the more friends and loved ones we once held close, the more agonizingly we pass one another by. Above all, the justice we once believed in crumbles into fragmented melancholy.

Once again, Ferdows comes to mind. Overwhelmed by shame and burdened by curses, he refused to surrender. He fought on, as he must have done even in the face of defeat. From outside, he would have observed the world turning upside down, alone, at the end of his turbulent journey.

Nadare exists as a being who resets the universe through her own demise. Those who fail to navigate the currents of **Collapse** become the subsequent Nadare. If this is indeed the case, they could be deemed as the ultimate losers. Tossed aside by circumstances, destined to be swept away by the surging tide. This Nadare, while never truly having **Collapse**, has, in that sense, "fallen" more profoundly than anyone else. Life has eluded her desired path, as she crawls through the mire of existence.

"It is not merely the physical entities that shall undergo **Collapse**, but the very essence of life itself. Although it leans more toward consequentialism. Black was once considered the color of good, as white is now."

Sirius had once said that the distinction between right and wrong has always been subjective, a matter of perspective.

On both sides, lives were being taken, indiscriminately snuffed out simply because they were different. In this universe, the concepts of right and wrong held no real substance, reduced to mere labels.

Black was associated with impurity and darkness, but it also possessed a formidable strength and unyielding nature. It carried a rough and arrogant demeanor, yet underneath it lay a curious spirit.

White, on the other hand, seemed to embody pure light, but it was a fragile and weak color. Rather than being modest, it leaned towards degeneracy, hindering the progress of civilization. While white showed respect to all that was good, it lacked a certain level of decency, often falling short in comparison.

"Compared to one who is always angry and weeping, laughing abundantly and finding joy in life. That's the essence of it," Nadare explained, acknowledging the generalizations she made.

The distinction between "good" and "evil" was merely a name for the act of killing each other, as Nadare had mentioned earlier. In this current universe, legitimacy was nothing more than a game of words. Hence, good and evil existed only as fleeting illusions, easily reversed when the positions were shifted.

It was the hidden rule of the universe. In the aftermath of **Collapse**, chaos ensued. This was partly due to the numerical balance between black and white, but mostly because there was a desire to rebel against the established order.

Nadare declared, capturing the attention and stirring the emotions of those who heard her words.

"I am good. I am evil. Listen closely, true justice is a... conflagration. Such a passionate story wasn't an everyday occurrence. As a result, the generation that had witnessed the exodus was nearing extinction. The survivors were either dull-witted fools or innocent children who had forgotten the past."

I knew that the first meant Vohu Manah, and the second Khvarenah. I realized that their existence was shaped by their respective colors and positions.

"When there is no one left to remember the past, they naturally settle down," Nadare explained.

It was a delicate balance, with white in numbers and black in quality. It didn't matter who raised which flag.

"What were you doing all this time?"

"A lot of things. People say I'm a bit of a maverick, that I don't know how to have fun, that I'm strange. Perhaps I may appear enlightened, but the truth is, I no longer comprehend the world around me. I clung to the old cycle, yearning for the days when I was still called good. No, I still yearn for it. I feel it deep within me. I want to scream, to rebel, to be pitiful. I dream of experiencing another **Collapse**, of never being spared again. Don't you feel the same way? The ultimate darkness is a terrible thing to hear."

"No, it's not. That's not what it means," I replied, shaking my head as I reflected on all that I had witnessed.

The pinnacle of white, the 'Hero of 'everyone'' was an empty entity devoid of feeling. It served as a vessel, mirroring the image of Nahid, whom Sirius had tried to save.

On the contrary, the 'Everyone's Demon King' was the antithesis of a hero. It embodied shame and disgrace, a true blackness that had lost all luster, steeped in negative emotions and frustrating experiences. Even the self-loathing that was meant to be its end had been erased, plunging them into an empty abyss.

The pinnacle of white cherished the power of prayer but lacked a heart, while the pinnacle of black embraced relentlessness as its righteousness, endlessly tormented.

Neither could be generalized, and their ultimate destination was nothingness.

Considering the nature of this world, it was a grand charade, it was only natural for those at the top of the hierarchy to be as they were.

Did Nadare realize this too?

She must have, and that was why she played with a wicked smile and a glimpse of "I have attempted suicide many times" in her eyes.

"I have tried suicide many times, and I have even tried to destroy the world, but it just didn't work out that way. When 'Angra Mainyu' is the centerpiece of all of creation, it's

impossible for Demon Kings to kill each other, but a similar kind of inhibition works towards me. The concept of Nadare is supposed to be the administrator of the struggle between good and evil, and it is only God who wants us to keep utilizing my subservience."

"So is this the only moment you can find liberation?"

"Yes. When the seven Demon Kings die, leaving the previous Nadare alone, she invites the remaining side of justice to be her guests. For a brief moment, 'Angra Mainyu' is transformed into a realm of pure nirvana. shielded from the waves of Tentsui, but, well, you can imagine the outcome."

Essentially, those who survived at that point became the standard bearers of the roles. The subsequent developments followed a similar pattern.

"'Everyone's Demon King' and the 'Hero of 'everyone'' clash in an evenly matched battle. And once the fight to the death concludes, all that remains is the Divine Sword and the being chosen to become the next Nadare."

Thus, the cycle repeats itself endlessly. 'Angra Mainyu' succumbs to despair and perpetuates the foolish dualism tirelessly.

"I was a low-ranking member of the 'black,' cast aside from the outpost. Even when I was called to become 'Nadare,' I was dismissed because I wasn't taken seriously. So I wasn't present for the final battle, and the intentions of the previous Nadare remain unknown. Did she desire to halt the world's turning or simply wished for a swift death, electing a new representative for her suffering? Either way, it's pointless to know now," Nadare sighed.

"And what about you?"

Magsarion, who had been silent for a long time, solemnly broke his silence, drawing my attention. The sword of cruelty, determined to slay after learning everything about its opponent. His intense gaze, burning deeper than the darkness, indicated that his analysis was complete.

"You mentioned that you've made so many mistakes that you don't understand what's happening."

Simultaneously, I realized that my role in this had come to an end. Oh, because our previous exchanges were mostly confirmations. I had been relaying the situation to Magsarion, ensuring that I regained all of my memories as the Divine Sword. His own tuning and support were necessary for what lay ahead.

"Heh, why do you think so?" Nadare questioned, her strangely shaped eyes filled with pressure.

The atmosphere froze instantly, all attention shifting towards Magsarion... But just before that, he glanced briefly at me. Certainly, he had his own battle to fight. We didn't need to interfere with each other. However, we had once made a promise to do everything in our power to bring about this universe's downfall. And I would uphold that promise—I would remember. Yes, I remember. I swore back then!

"I will emerge victorious. And I will... I will be the sword that guides you to triumph."

'I' prayed with all my heart for a miracle for my son.



Nadare and Magsarion, now fixated on each other's faces, continued their conversation as if they were slashing at one another, unconcerned about what transpired in the background. They carried on, as if cutting each other off, disregarding what unfolded beside them.

"That may be true at the core, but it was you who brought Varhran twenty years ago, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that's correct. But what does that matter? The first step is to understand the problem. The mightiest Demon King of this era and a valiant hero, destined to play their respective roles as the reverse, what could be a greater comedy!"

"Varhran are no hero." Magsarion shook his head, firm and unwavering.

"And Khvarenah is no mere Demon King."

This was an undeniable fact. Varhran wasn't merely a concept in existence; he possessed an otherworldly presence, with a halo that exuded 'immutability'. If so, then an arrangement with their participation will surely turn the game properly.

"You sought to expand their influence. And your plan has indeed been successful."

"In what way?"

"I'm not a fool. Khvarenah changed afterward, and I can assure you that Varhran awakened."

At the mention of Varhran's awakening, both of them, who had halted, began to move. As a result, neither of them achieved their objectives fully, but there was no denying the significant damage inflicted on the world.

"And there were others."

In the intricate dance of fate, the birth of Quinn, a manifestation of the differentiated Divine Sword, remained unspoken but evident to Magsarion. This peculiar anomaly had a tendency to drive people to madness.

It mirrored the events that unfolded three months ago in the Fractured World, where an unprecedented alliance between the Demon King and the Holy King was forged, with Nadare playing a hidden role in the intricate web of events.

"You haven't given up on overthrowing the world," Magsarion spoke, his voice laced with a calculated determination. "Though your methods may be convoluted and petty, there must be reasons preventing you from freely exercising your desires. I find solace in the fact that your attempts at bloodshed will fail."

Methodically and mercilessly, Magsarion dissected the accumulated information, laying it bare before Nadare. He deconstructed it piece by piece, serving it up on a platter, only to slay the recipient just as they were about to comprehend it.

Magsarion's astuteness left Nadare with no choice but to raise her hands in surrender, admitting defeat.

"No," Magsarion interjected, "you are truly brilliant. I did not expect you to unravel so easily, despite your awareness."

Nadare chuckled, but there was no mirth in her laughter; it carried a haunting undertone.

Indeed, this place was extraterritorial only during the final battle and briefly after its resolution. It existed beyond the reach of the **Avesta's** gaze and will. Nadare and Ahura Mazda, the overseers of the eternal struggle between good and evil, were cast as immutable entities of black and white. Thus, a blank space was necessary to shield them from the ravages of **Collapse**. However, this freedom from celestial laws was limited to this singular moment, exposing a fatal flaw in the structure of their existence.

"If there was anything I could do for the world, it could only be in this space. It seems so simple once you comprehend it, yet why do you think all the previous Nadare have been biding their time until now? It is a matter of pride, isn't it? If all that remains is the expected outcome, hope is lost."

"I concur."

"The previous Nadare likely came perilously close to realizing this plan. If only Varhran had been born earlier, if only he had not succumbed to the enchantment of the Divine Sword... The immutable beauty of the universe would have been rewritten by now."

Perhaps the previous Nadare refrained from utilizing the last Fractured World until the final moment. Knowing that summoning the Six Demon Kings after their **Collapse** was an

impossibility, she must have fought vehemently against her inevitable fate, even in the face of insurmountable odds.

Had Varhran been born during that time, he would have been welcomed into her fold. If the new world had leaked out from the extraterritorial realm, he could have defeated her, but by the narrowest of margins.

Was it misfortune?

Or was it karma?

"I believe he did not have the opportunity to kill me back then. In any case, the valiant hero was resolute in his intention to slay me, and I, too, was left broken. One could argue that my heart was shattered. It may not be the ideal solution, but I do not blame him. So, what do you wish to accomplish?"

Magsarion laughed, returning to his initial question.

"You do not have another Nadare at your disposal at the moment. Is there no one you desire?"

"That is the question, isn't it?", Nadare sighed, feeling caught up in the intricacies of the situation, her hand resting upon her chin in contemplation.

*(This section is meant to be really confusing as both Magsarion and Nadare are speaking of concepts and ideals removed from the 'First Heaven' and as they approach the singularity, distorted sentences emerge while having the original meaning so if you didn't understand something, just the gist of the conversation would suffice.)*

*Quinn and Magsarion go to 'Angra Mainyu,' Nadare's base → She discusses the concept of the position of Nadare and how it comes to be → She further explains about Tentsui's (The Collapse of the Universe) and explains how everything reverses, black becomes white, white becomes black, etc... → Nadare goes on to explain her motivations and the reason she planned the Day of Collapse on Wahman Yasht 20 years ago was to set in motion the final plan to end the cycle of Nadare, she's just incredibly suicidal and sick of being forced into a role she never wanted → Magsarion and Nadare discuss Varhran and the plan he foresaw with Munsarat's Commandment and why all events happened due to his planning → She then talks about previous Nadare's and the influence Varhran could have done if he was born earlier, and how this Nadare plans to end the cycle, thus*

*not selecting a next Nadare candidate as she tricked the Avesta into thinking she's following it's laws.)*

"Kaikhosru, Sirius or Khvarenah, if they were the ones who came here, I would gladly give my life."

It is the Nadare's duty to draw the veil over the old world with her death. Talk about origin, neither Khvarenah nor Kaikhosru are black kings. Therefore, there are no problems with the rules. In other words, you can conduct a riot by watching the appearance of the surface. The meticulousness of close attention even in the realm of extraterritoriality is natural for someone who is obsessed with failure - this must be an extremely terrifying decision.

"After I have fully fulfilled my role, I do not want to give birth to another Nadare again. I will be the last one. I cannot refuse this, because I have not achieved anything."

"Does the current situation look like it will?"

"You are somewhat like me."

In a cold voice that chilled the soul, the black ultimate described the black ferocious warrior:

"Even if you don't intend to carry the shape of the future on your back, you are trying to strike a decisive blow. Such beings are hell-bent on destroying it."

In his hand he holds a pair of black and white blades.

"If you have any complaints, show me what is different. I am a half-hearted person, so I have poor eyesight and dull intuition. Khvarenah and others may have known, but what is your 'immutable'? — O Hero, I want to know if this is possible."

I'm fighting. As long as it doesn't fit my glasses, I won't do anything to get killed. It was Nadare's duty - it was the last pride left in me, whose real name had been erased. I just want my wish came true. I love "everyone" with all my heart. I want to reincarnate them in a place that is not here, with

their unchanging brilliance. For this I would like to spend tens of thousands of years, hundreds of millions of years, even forever. I decided to continue.

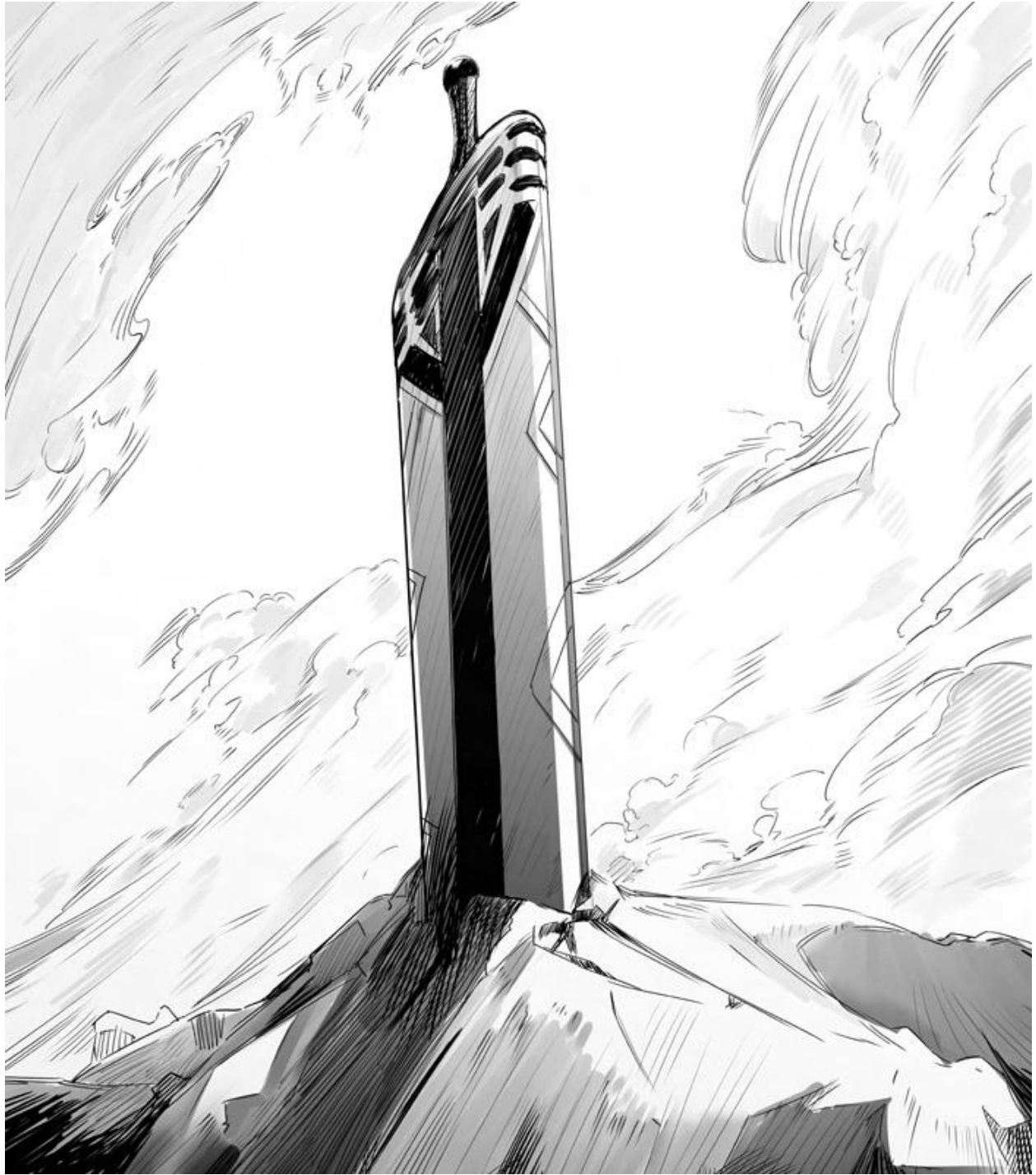
Whispered softly, Nadare swinging her two blades as she descended from the air.

"Oh, if you think about it, Kaikhosru said something wonderful. Let's repeat this. 'Let's make him fall in love with you.'"

### 3

I opened my eyes, greeted by a sight that held no surprises, for it unfolded exactly as I had anticipated. Without hesitation, I moved on to my next course of action.

The vast expanse before me, bathed in light streaming from a skylight, revealed a small field of flowers and the majestic presence of a "sword" standing there.



Each of us had a different purpose for visiting this place. One sought to seal Frederica, another to convey her final will and testament, and the last was none other than to reveal the truth.

"Come out, Ahura Mazda."

Her body, once wounded, now showed no trace of injury. This was the spiritual realm of the divine sword, after all. Twenty years ago, on the verge of being swallowed up by Khravenah, this place was created to separate "her" from me.

“Perhaps I had underestimated you to some extent.”

Standing beside the Divine Sword, a woman appeared. She possessed golden and silver eyes, representing the embodiment of the laws of the universe. Those eyes gleamed with a hint of amusement.

"So, you have turned my **Commandments** against me, haven't you?"

“Yes, thanks to them.”

Ahura Mazda, the other half of me, possessed additional **Commandment**.

"In this universe, I possess powers akin to omniscience. The Divine Sword, Nadare, the nature of the hero, the truth of the flow... They bind me from speaking of the mysteries of this era, but in general, any information that inconveniences you is forbidden."

"I see. The key is to prevent you from speaking of anything unfavorable."

It was only natural, as she also oversaw the management and operation of the struggle between good and evil. I remembered how faithfully she fulfilled her role when she was born, though things had changed since then.

"But there are certain individuals you can converse with. Nadare is an exception, an alter ego in the broadest sense of the term. Of course, you are my alter ego as well, but I did not create you simply to vent my grievances."

“I understood.”

“My weaknesses must have been an obstacle.”

"Indeed," she nodded, without a trace of shame. "To move forward, I have detached my fragile aspects. I could have discarded the foolish half of myself, but I thought I could make use of it while I was at it.”

Her words were spoken with a calm demeanor, as if she had merely brushed off dirt from her clothes. Instead of feeling indignation, I felt a sense of emptiness, of uselessness, which was the hesitation that Ahura Mazda deemed unnecessary.

"By the law of separation, I have erased you from my memory. However, since we are one and the same, we share the same **Commandment**. "

"I, who have lost my memory, have no opportunity to tell the truth. But the inability to speak played a part in omniscience."

"So, I thought I would continue my annoying, out of focus, and depressing meddling. I thought I should grasp Magsarion, Sirius, and the scales of adversity with my limited knowledge and abilities. If I was born to protect, then you were born to destroy."

"...But it seems things did not go as you hoped."

I interjected directly. Looking up, I met her gaze head-on. The only miscalculation for Ahura Mazda had been the power of prayer.

Its depth.

Its strength.

"What you wanted was for me to draw you out in a more catastrophic manner."

Her plan was to bring those who could potentially destroy the world into contact with them, to incite their primal instincts and drive them wild like beasts.

"Yes, as you say, in my foolishness, I stepped on many landmines. But not entirely," she replied.

By the time I touched Varhran, it was already too late, and he was almost completely detached from the current '**Heaven**'.

"Soon after our separation, I became attuned to your prayers, subconsciously placing them above all else. I tried to save them for the sake of my husband and my son. I understand the concept of fighting against **Avesta**, but isn't that too far from your shameless taste? The evidence is now we stand against each other."

Pointing a finger at me, she smiled with a sarcastic tone and shared her revelation.



"I have revealed the 'truth' to Sirius. He despised the Divine Sword and questioned what was so special about his wounded and broken self... At that time, I imparted my **Commandment** to him and broke him. And now, we find ourselves in this situation."

"Nadare and the Divine Sword remain unchanging, embodying the dichotomy of black and white. They will not waver, for their purpose is to turn the cycle. On the other hand, it's a strange story to kill your own sense of touch as a punishment."

"Then, this is the perfect moment to end it. Let us determine who is the true 'sword' between the two of us and engage in a game," she proposed.

When I broke Ahura Mazda's **Commandment**, my own **Commandment** not to move unless instructed also vanished. I interpreted this as an omen that we would assume a new form. Now, we were truly in the midst of battle, drawing upon the currents of destiny that would guide us to our ultimate destination.

"...You really managed to surprise me. Were you truly attuned to me that you delved so deeply into my **Commandments**?" she asked, half in awe.

"I believe experiencing the miracle of being held by Varhran, conceiving a child, and giving birth is a wondrous thing," I responded.

She was not angry; she had simply forgotten the power of a loving heart and the wonders it could achieve.

"I understand love, and I do not possess it," Ahura Mazda shook her head, as if dismissing the notion.

It was clear whom she was referring to, though she was reluctant to admit it.

"Do you think you love Varhran? What do you truly know about him?"

"I do not know. I do not know. I do not know. I do not want you to see my husband as some shallow being. However, I will answer based on my own understanding. It may be a subjective interpretation, if you will permit."

Silently, I urged Ahura Mazda to continue, waiting for her words. While my memory of the Divine Sword had mostly been restored, I was far from being omniscient. My ability to process and comprehend vast amounts of information paled in comparison to the original. Thus, her story was

still worth hearing. And when it came to the "truth" about Varhran, there was no denying its significance.

There were three elements that could not be overlooked when discussing him: his birth, what he took from Nahid, and what he took from Munsarat.

"Let us discuss them in order. Do you remember Bushyasta? The daughter of the heroes from the previous cycle. She became a Star Spirit, a pillar to revitalize Hiranyapura, the city ravaged by war. Her **Commandment** was 'To never refuse what is given' in exchange for 'unparalleled adaptability.'"

Ahura Mazda's expression showed a hint of torment as she reacted to my words.

"Yes, it does bear some resemblance to your Commandment."

It seemed that the higher beings of the white side often served instrumental purposes, much like Nahid. Provide them with a musical instrument, and they would instantly become skilled players. And the notion of "what is given" extended beyond material possessions— it encompassed positions, attributes, and everything else.

"So, are you suggesting...?" I trailed off, sensing where she was leading.

"That's right. The corrupted Bushyasta, despite being seen as indolent and apathetic after the Great **Collapse**, was quite the opposite. No one embraced and embodied the duties of the dark as flawlessly as she did."

This world was a tapestry of black and white. When the law dictated that they must kill one another, both sides sought the presence of an adversary. Hiranyapura, once the bastion of the white race, had transformed into a realm of darkness, an incubator for heroes. Considering the city's history, it was a natural progression.

"But Varhran is not a true hero," I interjected.

"He is indeed a peculiar sub-species. He was born several years before Nahid. Moreover, his birth was not legitimate, which is rather unusual. So why was that the limit for Bushyasta?"

"No, no, no," a chill ran down my spine.

I understood Ahura Mazda's implications. The precept of unparalleled adaptability. It was not merely a guiding principle for Bushyasta to fulfill her role.

"She has become more like a Star Spirit, you see?"

"The '**Age of Zero**'..." I mumbled, my voice trembling involuntarily.

'Varhran, raised by Bushyasta, the black Star Spirit, possesses the dual attributes of being a 'Hero' and a resident of the '**Age of Zero**'!'

Hence, he was a sub-species, a soul inherently deformed from the beginning. The nature of his existence... even observing how Ferdows transformed into that abomination, it was impossible to identify what truly is 'him.'

"Is that why Varhran is someone no one can truly comprehend?"

"Perhaps... the workings of a hero's mind are not naturally ordinary, but Varhran stands apart from a mere existence. His emotions, though present, differ in kind and perception from those of others. It is as if he experiences a unique form of synesthesia, where senses intertwine and intertwine again, creating a complex tapestry of feelings. Indeed, it is akin to a symphony of taste in a sound or the dance of form within a smell."

Synesthesia, with its peculiar ability to elicit multiple perceptions from a single stimulus, manifests in Varhran's intricate and enigmatic personality. If we assume that Varhran's mind was like that, it is no wonder he had such a complicated and mysterious personality.

He is a friend of Sirius, Nahid's betrothed, Magsarion's father and brother— an audacious and valiant hero who ignites a spark of hope in all who encounter him. And this is no mistake. He laughs, he weeps, he seethes with anger, and he loves. The impression he leaves is one of turmoil and charm, reminiscent of a mischievous boy who, in growing up, retains his normality within the framework of societal norms.

Yet, simultaneously, he gazes upon the '**Age of Zero**' with laughter, hearing the resounding abyss of **Naraka** when consumed by anger, and, even in his love for us, possesses a bird's-eye view from the other side.

It is not a stark contrast between black and white, nor a metaphor for the hearts of humans and insects. After all, we are bound by the limits of our understanding within this '**Heaven**'. The values that lie deep within the utterly divergent '**Age of Zero**' remain incomprehensible and defy explanation. Even the omniscient Ahura Mazda cannot unravel them with certainty.

"I did mention subjectivity played a significant role. Nonetheless, that concludes our discussion on his birth," Ahura Mazda interjects.

Moving on to the next aspect, Ahura Mazda raises two fingers and continues to expound upon Varhran's companion. The spoils of war he acquired from Nahid and their significance.

"At first, Varhran lacked the power to gather prayers. It took him five years to overcome Bushyasta, a reasonable timeframe given that the denizens of Hiranyapura did not harbor high expectations. However, his power suddenly surged, swelling abnormally. What do you believe caused this?"

"Could it be because... Nahid's birth had already taken place?"

"Yes, as an existence that surpassed the boundaries of a prescribed 'script,' Varhran was not meant to be a prominent figure, but rather a humble performer hidden in the shadows. The more Nahid devoted herself to Sirius, the more complicated and unreadable the script surrounding them became."

"But Varhran didn't wish to be a performer, did he?" I query.

"Deep down, he already possessed the heart of one. The more he delved into the script, the more he yearned for it," Ahura Mazda responds.

"Then, why did he desire Nahid's legitimate script? It seemed a choice that would negate what he already possessed— a mystery that proved challenging to fathom. If he would take away the authentic hero qualifications and gain a position into which everyone's prayers flow, wouldn't he be eroded by the attributes of the void?"

"Not necessarily," she counters.

"The crucial aspect is unifying everyone under the existence of a hero. Isn't the usurper the one who seeks to end such initiative? Isn't that the essence of his **Commandment**?"

So, what purpose did Varhran have for employing the script? He would channel the prayers and transform them into power. However, he did not adhere to the prescribed path of the script, and even then, the script is not meant to be used like that.

"It is for the purpose of translation," Ahura Mazda interjects, providing a concise response.

Those words momentarily stun me, and I recall Ferdows' final moments. The reality of the 'Zero' event, wherein he was compelled to confront that side of the world.

“Varhran possessed a somewhat misplaced optimism, a trait that accompanied him throughout his life. While he exhibited joy, anger, sorrow, and love, we must not overlook the swirling emotions from higher dimensions. Varhran sought to convey and transport these two sets of values to 'everyone.' He yearned for their prayers to serve as a dictionary

for this task. His dedication to this endeavor was so consuming that he often found himself lost within the tempest of his own thoughts.”

Ahura Mazda's words seemed like a song from a distant land, difficult to grasp.

"Was he connecting us to that '**Age of Zero**'? Bridging the chasm and enabling communication?"

I almost dismissed the notion as absurd, but upon reflection, I considered its plausibility.

Varhran may be the sole translator across past, present, and eternity capable of such a feat.

“However the perplexing question still remains— why did he desire this?”

“I understand the question. But think about it more simply. The purpose of a hero, albeit substandard, is none other than to fight.”

Ahura Mazda's playful smile accompanies the raising of a third finger, indicating the last crucial element that defines Varhran: the **Commandment** he acquired from Munsarat.

“During the moment of taking it from Nahid, Varhran's actions may have been driven by instinct. What form of victory should he achieve as a brave hero endowed with 'Zero'? Even if he was unaware of the answer, he diligently prepared for battle— a practice customary for a hero.”

"And did he find the answer?"

Ahura Mazda's eyes gleam with excitement, moistened with a sense of revelation. She understood that she, too, had found the victory she seeks in that very moment. This marked the encounter between the Divine Sword and the hero— an episode of profound significance.

“I don't intend to explain the functions of Munsarat's **Commandment** now. You seem to be wondering how far ahead Varhran was looking when he took it from him, but you are once again

lacking the crucial perspective as expected. Why did you think it was the future that he wished to seek?"

"What do you mean?" I exclaim, taken aback.

Yet, in the next instant, the logic becomes apparent. As long as Varhran's purpose is intertwined with the '**Age of Zero**', he must look backward to move forward.

"Montserrat endeavored to peer into the future, bypassing the present and past— a perspective inherently flawed in its nature. The future is an accumulation of the past, and to navigate the path ahead with certainty, one must vividly comprehend what came before."

This compelling argument leaves me speechless. This must be how Varhran arrived at the truth of the '**Age of Zero**'. The probability of him manifesting the desired future becomes extraordinarily high— almost impossible to dismiss.

"I had a pact with Varhran, allowing me insight into a portion of the '**Age of Zero**' story he translated. I have gained some understanding of what '**She**' envisioned when creating this universe. It is an act of revenge," Ahura Mazda reveals.

"Revenge against something within the '**Age of Zero**'?"

"Yes, 'She' was vanquished in the past, which is why 'She' requires it. An army of warriors, the epitome of both quantity and quality," Ahura Mazda explains.

"Don't tell me we are solely to be dispatched for that purpose?" I react, feeling not only anger but also a wave of dizziness at the sheer self-centeredness of the situation.

What, then, became of the history of struggle that unfolded repeatedly until now?

Were the blood-soaked tragedies, filled with fury, fear, and vengeance, nothing more than rehearsals?

"I understand your sentiment, but denying it is futile. Discussing war in the face of an imminent threat serves no purpose," Ahura Mazda calmly states.

"So, you believe **Naraka** is coming for us?"

"It will, eventually."

Whether in ten years, a hundred years, tens of thousands, hundreds of millions, or even a mere second from now remains unclear. Although Ahura Mazda does not state it explicitly, her certainty is absolute. And I can infer why.

Varhran's purpose is to lead that very army.

“Every hero, Demon King, **Ashavan, Asura, Daeva, Deva**, Hegemony candidates empowered to create new worlds, and even ‘herself’— the mightiest known as ‘Pantheon’— I don't know the exact details, but it seems possible to resurrect every single one of them. In fact, Varhran will not fade away; for he shall emerge when the time is right.”

Although it sounds like a dream to me, I cannot casually dismiss it as nonsensical. There is a certain persuasiveness and unfathomable nature to the hero in question.

Varhran's departure from the stage after his defeat against Khvarenah held a profound purpose—to liberate the rest of humanity from the battle's clutches.

It was from that very moment that Magsarion, Sirius, Nahid, and even me were born, emerging amidst the chaos that unfolded. Even Samluch and others found prominence through the tumultuous aftermath of the hero's demise. And now, I find myself entrusted with a similar task by Ahura Mazda.

In particular, it was crucial for Sirius to tread the path of cruelty and heartlessness. His love, though genuine, would have been deemed useless and obstructive if the confrontation with **Naraka** took precedence. While I resent this fact, I also sense that his presence will be indispensable after the war concludes.

Hence, the time is not now. My intuition, it seems, was correct.

"Do you comprehend?" Ahura Mazda queries.

"Yes. Varhran's motive is to wage an assault against **Naraka**, isn't it?" I utter, overcome by the unexpected truth of the situation.

Varhran perceives a realm of reality that transcends common sense, one in which even the core concept is different, not the strength of power. Engaging in combat against such an adversary is akin to producing sound from colors— an endeavor that can only be comprehended through the aid of translation, facilitated by Varhran's synesthesia, allowing him to strike and battle 'Naraka.'

"One final matter. It appears that 'She' initially conceived the notion of battling enemies from other worlds. So, was Varhran born as a result of that desire?"

"No, it would be inaccurate to assert that. Although there was likely a plan to prepare such an individual, Varhran arrived much earlier than scheduled," Ahura Mazda clarifies.

"On what grounds?"

"Because this universe seems to be the archetype," Ahura Mazda declares, extending her hands in a gesture of disdain towards the chaotic remnants of the **Collapse**.

"The Star Spirits acts as a miniature reflection of God. They shape their bodies into worlds, governing the lives within by the laws of authority. Yet, on rare occasions, a distinct foreign entity arises, undermining the established order. This allowance for substitution signifies that even the Divine Throne undergoes fluctuations when beings like Khvarenah are born.

Furthermore, the Grand **Collapse** of the universe, where good and evil are reversed upon the demise of Nadare, bears symbolic significance. Clearly, '**Avesta**', which weaves a dualistic narrative, presuming her eventual overthrow.

Positions awaiting replacement, laws ready to be renewed—the fluid nature of justice and values, the vibrant hues of the universe—indeed, it is an undeniable framework of the 'Pantheon,' as Ahura Mazda astutely stated.

"The **Gathas** represent a distinct aspect of the 'Pantheon.' It can be viewed as a simulation of Gods confronting Gods, can it not? Two spirited curmudgeons, prone to brawling, but never to the point of annihilation. They engage in combat but refrain from delivering fatal blows. The Demon Kings of the black, with its seven members, begs the question of why exactly there are seven," Ahura Mazda remarks. "Unfortunately, the criteria used to determine the number remain unknown."

"In other words," I interject, cutting through her prolonged discourse, eager to hear her answer.

"That's because 'She' predicted that the Divine Throne would change at least six times. She anticipated the emergence of a trump card capable of facing **Naraka**, hence envisioning the presence of seven pillars of Gods standing side by side. And yet Varhran, who was born from the beginning, is too dreadful! "



Ahura Mazda, proud as ever, knows she is fascinated by him from the depths of her soul. If she were to encounter a man capable of diminishing the vastness of this universal prison, she would willingly surrender her soul.

I, too, understand her sentiments well. I comprehend her weariness with the world, her yearning for dissolution. However, I shake my head.

“I hold reverence for Sirius, the one whom you deem unnecessary. I believe that every individual deserves a bright future and the ability to claim it for themselves. And that love, passed down from Ahura Mazda to Magsarion, though veering in different directions, will remain steadfast. For ‘I’ am his ‘mother.’”

Thus, my answer is clear— “I despise Varhran!”

At my furious outcry, originating from the depths of my being, Ahura Mazda lowers her gaze, shrugs her shoulders, and then looks up to the heavens, releasing a resounding, uproarious laugh.

"Come now, do not foolishly reject my offer within the confines of such a limited world," she taunts, emanating an aura of prayer that rivals a blazing divine authority. The Divine Sword, present since the universe's inception, possesses knowledge and power far beyond my own meager existence.

"But I shall not be defeated!"

I will not surrender custody of my ‘son’ to ‘her.’ It is evident that she would not treat him well, and thus, I engage her with the most formidable **Commandment** I have ever upheld.

"I shall make Magsarion the savior."

"No, it shall be my husband."

I am merely a cumbersome weapon, an antiquated tool meant for worship and servitude. Nonetheless, I yearn to be the sword that safeguards my candidate for the future, despite my flaws and tendency to drift into contemplation over my existence.

With this vow etched in my heart, I plunge myself into the decisive battle, risking everything and unleashing all my miracles on the line.

What an extraordinary man of bravery and heroism. That was the profound impression he left on me when I finally had the chance to meet him.

However, it was clear to me that he was no ordinary individual. He was not a mere puppet or a cog in the relentless machinery of this world, like myself and Nadare. He existed in a realm beyond our comprehension— a realm untouched by the limitations of our common senses.

His supernatural nature reminded me of the archetypal heroes found only in stories, capable of traversing conventional paths and even transcending them.

I knew that my personal troubles were but a trifling matter to him. From his perspective, even a future diametrically opposed to our own held no significance. It was akin to ants scurrying about, their movements inconsequential when viewed from a bird's eye.

Varhran existed outside the confines of our world— a fact that painfully highlighted my own insignificance. I yearned to cast aside all inhibitions and witness the culmination of a wholly different world.

I understood that the concepts of right and wrong were subjective constructs, mere linguistic playthings. I cared not if I were later accused of being the harbinger of evil. I longed for an unconventional companion who would walk the path of mortal sin while I held onto my dreams of paradise. My heart was so captivated that thoughts of him overwhelmed me in the midst of a catastrophic, self-destructive impulse.

Since the dawn of creation, I had been praying for him, and that prayer had become my fervent dream of liberation.

Yet, deep down, I knew he would not spare a second thought for my desires. He would consider them inconsequential, eclipsed by an immeasurable sense of value for this ‘**Heaven**’.

He would realize that he could not wield a woman like me, but he would mock himself and claim that he would do anything to shatter this foolish sword...

I recall weeping unknowingly as the valiant man enfolded me in his embrace.

"I understand your perspective," he said, his voice tinged with understanding.

And then, with a strange and gentle warmth, he wiped away my tears.

"Alright, let's put an end to it all. The original plan was to repeat the process until the seventh generation, but I'll conclude it in this very generation."

I couldn't fully grasp his words, but I sensed a shift in his approach. It became clear to me that he was considering my feelings in an attempt to safeguard my life.

"For you, the outcomes are always ambiguous— neither purely good nor wholly bad. It's never a simple black-and-white dichotomy. Oh so that's why you shed tears... I apologize, for I am just a little unbalanced."

"What do you mean?" I inquired.

"I will ensure that no one else is born into a position as agonizing as yours."

Taking my hand, he made a solemn promise in a calm tone.

"Together, we will achieve true victory. The path may be arduous, but will you join me? Ahura Mazda."

Though I still couldn't discern Varhran's true intentions, I did not hesitate.

A tremor of determination surged within me upon hearing him express the hardships he endured and the pain he carried. The fact that he, who typically paid little attention to my reasons, showed such thoughtfulness despite his own clumsiness, moved me. In his own way, he sought to bring my dream to fruition.

It was reminiscent of a God toying with his subjects. This realization engulfed me, and the emotions welling up in my heart dissolved the anguish of this wretched history.

"As long as I am with you, wherever we go..."

Hence, there was nothing to fear. I would be reborn. The crucial thing to remember is that one cannot simply walk into a store and ask for a discount.

"The fewer tears flow," Varhran remarked, "the better."

Ahura Mazda and I, Quinn, simultaneously grasped the Divine Sword thrust into the earth. The transmigration of the Divine Throne served as a training ground, recruiting and honing those who would oppose **Naraka**. The harsher the world, the sharper they would become. According to the original plan, the universe would be drenched in blood for seven generations.

"And to prevent such a calamity we intend to bring it all to an end in this very generation."

"Yes, but where does justice lie in that?"

The clash between us unfolded, swords of steel meeting with a resounding clash. 'She' had become an evil God in order to achieve victory over **Naraka**. As long as this universe remained the archetype, the subsequent **Heavens** would be no different— perhaps slightly varied in flavor, but ultimately resembling the present one shared by Nadare and Ahura Mazda.

"Instead, you have turned the present into a further inferno. I cannot accept this in my eyes."

"Don't spout such childish nonsense!"

The woman's face flushed slightly. The prayer of all existence of Ahura Mazda resided within the Divine Sword over there.

"The unborn are blameless; there is no reason to involve them. We, and only we, are the sinners—the wretches who breathed life into this foolish universe, blinded by the illusion of good and evil. We shall fight against **Naraka** with every ounce of our being. Regardless of the path of the **Meifu Madou**, we must resolve it within our generation."

"Is that your retribution? That's a grand proclamation, but..." I interrupted her, charging forward, my knees straining.

"After all, you too are narrow-minded! You claim the world is as it is, yet you have swelled its ranks with an army of warriors wearing familiar faces."

In plain words, Ahura Mazda revels in Varhran's kindness. She desires to believe that he, as the savior, is absolute, twisting any pleasant dream he has into a vision of justice. A woman who possessed a profound understanding of this world, yet remained deeply entangled within it, drenched in the perpetuity of futility, and a man with a higher perspective who tended to be optimistic about current problems— perhaps, in a sense, they were a perfect match.

The encounter between the two allowed Ahura Mazda to comprehend the purpose of the Divine Throne's birth, while Varhran recognized the pitiable existence of God. They became each other's teachers, and their policy of seeking a swift resolution for an unchanging "victory" may appear righteous at first glance, but it is ultimately mistaken.

"I too wish to spare future generations from carrying the burden, and I believe that those who are alive today must shed blood for their sake. However..."

With a swift sword strike from above, I conveyed a truth she could not ignore.

"The choice between you and Varhran is one that eradicates the possibility of a future!"

"If the law were to persist for 7 Thrones as ruthlessly as the reign of the evil God binding us to this fate, the world would obviously be worthless. And if the people discover that they were merely soldiers conceptualized to fight a war against an enemy they know nothing about, who knows how ferociously their anger would ignite?"

"But on the other hand, it is because they are proud to be treated as vanguard that they are furious. Surely, tales of unwavering faith would emerge amidst the depths of hell, much like ours. And you plan to extinguish it all? Then where the hell should they go? I don't propose extolling **Avesta**, but without this universe, I would not exist either. Everyone else there in the future generations are the same."

I couldn't see Samluch. I couldn't hear Ferdows' gentle words, Alma's romantic entanglements couldn't sway me, and A-chan's cheerfulness wouldn't uplift me. King Sirius and Nahid, Incest and Mashyana, Frederica and Khvarenah, Montserrat and Kaikhosru, Roxanne and Bahlavan, the Locusts of Ferocity— none of them would have existed.

And Quinn and Magsarion... it is from this that we truly lived, enduring countless struggles. Some of them, I still hold disdain for, but I believe our path was just.

"Do you deny the precious prayers that future generations are destined to weave? Do you deny our efforts?"

"If we say that only those who lived in this time shall suffer, then the unborn will be spared. If that's the case, then it's better for our successors never to be born. Have you considered that?"

"No."

Skillfully repelling and parrying my sword, Ahura Mazda moved to counterattack.

"We are enough for those who can only flourish in hell. If they are destined to suffer even upon their birth, it would be more merciful than denying them existence from the start!"

"That's an arrogant line of reasoning!"

"Your argument reeks of sentimentalism at a rudimentary level. It's akin to saying one should be born without arms because the struggle makes for a beautiful life. That is evil."

Our blades clashed relentlessly— swift, sharp, heavy, and forceful.

It wasn't swordsmanship in its truest sense, but we were akin to it.

We, the swords, wielded the divine authority as extensions of our limbs.

I recall feeling disheartened upon realizing my surprising lack of talent in swordsmanship when I was dissociated from Ahura Mazda. That was only natural, as it was my original style.

Now, however, with my struggle no longer a laughing matter, I cherish every memory.

I am grateful to be who I am. I respect and appreciate all the past moments that constitute my being. Therefore, I wish to treasure the stories Ahura Mazda deemed unnecessary.

"If you wish to brand it as evil, be my guest. I understand that my thinking may be somewhat conservative. Nevertheless, I believe that a drastic change will not lead us to a profound resolution."

One must tread steadily, step by step, embracing mistakes.

Just how Sirius taught me.

Through the vicissitudes of life, struggling through the mire, inch by inch, pushing forward in the face of it all, it is through this we truly give merit to our eternal cycle.

Until the day when the rule of Gods becomes truly unnecessary, no matter how far we must journey, it will never be in vain.

The courage and determination of those who come after us will possess their own brilliance. It is unacceptable to speak so shortsightedly about eradicating everything, claiming it to be needless suffering.

Our role is to serve as a reminder to future generations. Let them mock us, saying, "What a foolish lot you were. You made it difficult for us. We worked hard to be unlike you." If we can continue in that manner, no matter the outcome of our battles, our generation can serve as the foundation of hope.

It is different from how Varhran went through life, simply because he never has truly lived. His omniscience was his hubris in the face of being human. And that is why...

"You and Varhran will lose."

Ahura Mazda's eyes widened momentarily as I reassured her. Seizing this opportunity, I swiftly struck back with my sword.



"You will not triumph so easily. How dare you mock my husband!"



Her voice reverberated with anger as she met my strike head-on, creating a thunderous clash that enveloped us in a state of hiddenness. As I stared into her eyes, ablaze with fury, I continued to speak in a hushed tone, my rage simmering beneath the surface.

"Magsarion will bring you all down. I will make him avenge you. And I will also save him from the clutches of **Meifu Madou**. Though I do not yet know how, I will persist in my pursuit."

I yearned to be the sword that challenged his malevolence, restraining his wickedness just in time before it bursts.

"Magsarion is a manifestation of self-destruction, an apoptosis, corroding the Divine Sword, an Evil Sword that not only destroys itself but the Divine Sword as well. It serves no purpose except for killing. While it embodies the pinnacle of killing, I no longer seek that blade."

"So you changed your stance when you made the pact with Varhran."

"Indeed, I shifted to a different approach in utilizing Magsarion. The reconstructed plan would end with 'you' and him mutually annihilating each other. The final two remaining would be 'me' and Varhran, and that's when the true events will unfold."

Even though the process has been muddled due to the division of targets between Ahura Mazda and the me with added emotions and the desire for more, the urge to kill will expand infinitely. The hatred for the world's workings and the longing to kill 'everyone.'

If it had not been for the fact that she had unintentionally incited such hatred in the universe, it would have been impossible to capture Ahura Mazda, who had gone into hiding.

"But things have already changed. You, in your omniscience, could not have foreseen this shift, although the Munsarat's Rebounding Gale (*a sort of balancing factor to a Commandment, making it so that it would not be as powerful as it could be without this limitation. it is Munsarat's ability that caused Frederica's love to Magsarion.*) must have hinted at it."

"Oh, it's mostly Varhran. I'm not sure if I could see the events involving him. But even if that's the case, what then?"

I staggered, but Ahura Mazda pursued, launching swords towards me.

"I've heard that you grew attached to Magsarion due to the prayer you received after our split, but in reality, you likely hold much deeper feelings. You carry memories of a promise made to him before he was even born— a bittersweet, nostalgic longing that gently claws at your heart."

"Yes, I cannot deny it. But what does it mean?"

"It is a self-destructive impulse, my, your, apoptosis. It is a desire for self-annihilation. I no longer possess such an urge. I have removed myself from it!"

And then, a swift strike unleashed from the side. The white blade, approaching my neck, halted just before reaching its target.

"Therefore, no matter what you do, you will propel yourself towards the edge of the deadly sword. No matter how much Magsarion's murderous intent expands, it will never reach Varhran, who exists beyond the infinite. Even 'She' will be destroyed in the process, as the separation of the Divine Sword has doubled the targets for self-destruction. Furthermore, his feelings towards Varhran will amplify his killing intent without limits, crushing the structure of the world with his hatred and the desire to kill 'everyone.'"

"...You speak of him as if he were a useful tool."

"That's precisely what he is. In short, he is nothing more than a janitor, tidying the stage before the performance. I love him, as he will be a dutiful son."

Her shameless statement threatened to set my consciousness ablaze, but I managed to maintain my composure. Observing my restraint, Ahura Mazda chuckled, her eyes tinged with a mocking glint.

"Oh, you possess great patience. I have no intention of killing you. I simply wish to render you so helpless that you are tempted to offer your head to Magsarion."

"...After all, you are a pitiful woman."

Once the momentary anger subsided, a profound sense of pity washed over me. Once again, I was grateful for who I had become.

"I have been engaged in the same pursuits for so long that I have lost touch with the true essence of growth. What kind of perspective do you possess?"

I longed for somewhere beyond this place. Ahura Mazda yearned for a new script, a story divergent from the one she had grown accustomed to, yet she remained bound by her old values. At the

culmination of our arduous journey, a faint flicker of shame emerged as the first sign of change. It was a dualistic act to separate and confront that suffering, even though she once reveled in it. She believed she had made an open-minded choice, yet she was trapped within a closed circle.

"You are mistaken, Ahura Mazda. No matter how exceptional your husband may be, you are only dragging him down in such a manner. I have told you many times that leaping forward in a single bound will only result in chaos."

Of course, I myself was far from liberated, still embroiled in this conflict. I was far from achieving a state of enlightenment, which is why I persisted in my struggle.

"Do not overstep your bounds. Both you and your husband should refrain from being engulfed by Magsarion and take a moment to regain your composure."

I anticipated Ahura Mazda's fury in response to my words.

"It matters not. He is no God."

Surprisingly, she spoke in a calm tone. I shrugged nonchalantly, unable to conceal my bewilderment.

"One should not take advice from a child."

Her words elicited a pleasant and exhilarating laugh that reverberated through my ears. Ahura Mazda readjusted her sword, clutching her stomach as she looked up at the heavens.

"I see, I understand your point. It may lack logic, but as a Divine Sword that channels prayers into power, it is a legitimate argument. So, would you like to join our side?"

"No way, no way."

She realigned her sword once again and fearlessly declared, "This is when the true battle begins. The game is finally becoming interesting. I have been bored for far too long. So please, stay by my side a while longer."

"I have no choice then. If your love affair must continue, I will have to endure it."

There were countless grievances I wished to express as well. And so, with unwavering devotion, we clashed our swords, united in our pursuit for the men we both believed in, dreaming of the grand cycle that awaited us.

Unbeknownst to us, time lost its meaning as we engaged in an eternal battle. Intuitively, we recognized that the final phase would consist of a two-on-two competition.

'My' husband and son, who held our fates in their hands, would determine the victor.

Anxiously awaiting that moment, we, the swords, poured all our energy into the fusion of sparks that would sharpen us to our pinnacle.

## 5

During this moment, the vastness of the universe remained oblivious to his existence. The grand battle between good and evil unfolded in a realm beyond the reach of the Great **Collapse**, rendering it inaccessible to all except the involved parties. However, it was a different story when it came to their influence and impact on the universe as a whole. In a broader sense, their conflict reverberated throughout the cosmos, resonating as the ultimate clash of forces.

"The final battle is underway. Its outcome will shape our destiny," echoed throughout the cells of 'Angra Mainyu,' instilling them with a profound awareness of the ongoing struggle.

The white-clad individuals chanted fervently, beseeching their hero, Magsarion, to bestow upon them a victorious gleam of his sword.

Meanwhile, the black-clad members howled and raged, invoking the name of Nadare, the mother, the oldest Demon King, urging her to annihilate their enemies with her mighty fangs.

Every individual cheered with all their might, their hopes pinned on the survival of their camp and the utter eradication of the opposing faction. Although they couldn't visually witness the clash between Nadare and Magsarion, they could sense its unfolding with every passing moment. They held an unshakable belief that their voices reached the battleground and were heard by their respective champions. Thus, doubt was banished, and they sang with unwavering honor and obedience. They were ready to slay anyone who stood in opposition, for they believed that their will to kill was the sole righteousness they shared. It was truly a collision of prayers and supplications that cleaved the universe in two.

Needless to say, two individuals stood at the heart of this conflict, carrying the weight of thoughts and emotions on their shoulders. However, neither Nadare nor Magsarion were cognizant of this fact, nor did they respond to the resounding cheers.

They harbored no desire to represent either good or evil. They were simply immersed in the intensity of the present battle.

Magsarion's lethal sword sliced through the sky, striking Nadare's side, while a spinning hooked blade collided with Magsarion's shoulder. The result was a mutual repulsion, their attacks failing to land on their intended targets. They engaged in a series of crossed stabs that interweaved and deflected without inflicting any damage.

Nadare erupted in laughter.

Magsarion blocked a lash aimed at severing his neck with his arm, launching a counterattack with a strike split, which, in turn, was blocked by her arm.

In essence, both attacks struck their opponents' bodies, yet no harm befell them.

Several minutes had passed since the commencement of the battle, yet the situation repeated itself. The two combatants refrained from unleashing their weapons upon each other, and although they appeared vulnerable, no blood was shed. Both sides displayed an unusual stoicism. Given their nature, their attacks could not be superficial.

Magsarion's temperament forbade him from holding back, and the more he learned about his adversaries, the sharper his blade became. Having gleaned insights into the ultimate black through conversation, he now possessed a special ability against Nadare.

On the other hand, as the oldest Demon King, Nadare possessed an extraordinary Fractured World that defied convention. She could manipulate the configuration of all things as she pleased, even altering the arrangement of stars and galaxies. When she channeled this power into a slash, it bestowed her unparalleled cutting prowess, enabling her to sever not only atomic bonds but also the very fabric of causality.

However, the deadlock between them undoubtedly stemmed from a mysterious aspect that eluded comprehension. Ironically, both forces were intertwined in their relentless pursuit of understanding the other.

"This is all quite entertaining, but things seem to be spiraling out of control," Nadare sighed, retreating while launching a side cleave as a precautionary measure.

Her movements were nimble but lacked exceptional speed or precision. In terms of technical finesse, she fell short of mastery. Her skills appeared to be honed through a certain level of training and real combat experience, yet, as the eldest of the combatants, she lacked depth and, in essence, remained mediocre. It was even perplexing how, after over 2000 years of existence, her martial arts skills had not reached a higher level.

"Let's shake things up a bit."

"I have no interest in competing with you solely in terms of strength."

Magsarion's unconventional movements, akin to a creature that exploited openings, crawled along the ground. It possessed a ferocity, yet an inherent roughness marred its form. Despite repeated practice of fundamental movements, it remained unrefined. Both combatants compensated for their lack of innate talent with alternative qualities.

Magsarion embodied the will to kill, but what did Nadare represent?

"Let's play tag."

In an instant, their positions reversed.

Unexpectedly caught off guard from behind, Magsarion suffered a painful blow to the back of his head, hurtling him forward. Nadare peered at the man who crashed through a wall, rolling through three rooms, and spoke with a voice devoid of amusement or disgust.

"Get up," Nadare commanded. "Remaining on the ground won't do you any good."

Silently, Magsarion approached once more. His movements, resembling a blend of snake and spider, proved elusive, making it exceedingly difficult for anyone with a tactical eye to anticipate his actions. In fact, Nadare could not track the black shadow with her eyes, nor did she make any attempt to do so.

It was just that.

Yet again, their positions shifted. Magsarion contorted his body ninety degrees to the side, evading the onslaught, while Nadare repositioned herself directly behind him. Although he narrowly

avoided the ensuing twin blades, a mere hair's breadth away, he found himself unexpectedly airborne, suspended in mid-air.

A forceful kick connected with his empty torso, sending him hurtling to the side, colliding with the floor. As he caught the descending heel, he was propelled upward, crashing into the ceiling this time. The force vector and spatial coordinates became a chaotic mess. Superficially, it appeared as a continuous display of teleportation, but it was not. Magsarion couldn't be tossed around so easily.

Transference required knowledge of preexisting shortcuts, a feat within the grasp of a deadly warrior's eyes and senses. However, they proved futile in this scenario. The occurrence of anomalies eluded detection, leaving them vulnerable and manipulated.

"Don't be so pessimistic. If you were an ordinary man, you wouldn't even perceive that something is amiss."

Amidst her irrational fury, Nadare spoke with genuine admiration. Magsarion's position could be manipulated, yet his body remained immutable. Therefore, she intensified the disorder in spatial coordinates, as if to emphasize the significance of starting from that very point.

In doing so, she sought to decipher her opponent's true worth through their resilience. It was akin to a Fractured World, but distinct from the shared experiences of previous generations of Nadare—it was uniquely hers.

**"Angra Mainyu: All The World's Evil."**

She announced the technique's name, and her power reached its peak.

Magsarion's limbs, fingers, and even the flow of his blood spun out of control under the influence of her gaze, following vectors completely detached from his will. It was, in essence, a manipulation of fate.

For the enemy, it was an unexpected turn of events—attacks he believed he had strike somehow missed, and counterattacks he was certain he had dodged struck home.

By nature, it was not a flashy power. As Zariched and Taurvid had previously experienced, the disconcerting misalignment between perception and reality created a bewildering effect. Gradually accumulating small discrepancies, by the time one comprehended the situation, it was too late.

Magsarion's own struggle lied in transforming what should have been a mere nuisance, a troublesome yet unassuming phenomenon, into a formidable threat.

In other words, the level of absurdity escalated proportionally to the power of the opponent. If facing an inferior adversary, it manifested as "natural misfortune," but when confronted with a formidable foe, the situation became even more nonsensical.

The strength of their wills clashed. His rebellion against the Fractured World intensifying with each passing moment. The more powerful he became, the more he was repelled by the collapsing reality surrounding them.

The ensuing chaos gave birth to unimaginable causality, rendering even the most ordinary occurrences impossible to comprehend. From simple positional relationships to physiological reactions and the direction of thought itself, everything began to spiral into disarray.

Bahlavan multiplied his attackers, fragmenting into multiple entities, while Khvarenah utilized his colossal size to his advantage.

In this twisted realm, both combatants resorted to ranged attacks, realizing that nothing in this world was as it seemed.

It was a perfect reflection of Nadare's existence, an infinite labyrinth of challenges.

To overcome this maze, she realized the only way was to unleash wide-scale destruction, with a purpose that remained ambiguous yet encompassing. For Bahlavan and Khvarenah, their phase and massive body respectively harmonized with the Fractured World, giving them an edge in their confrontation with Nadare. Their draw against her was, in part, due to this alignment. However, for Magsarion, it was an unfavorable match.

As a warrior driven by the desire to face and eliminate each and every opponent, he found himself trapped in a relentless cycle of counterattacks. His only option was to retaliate on a scale befitting his adversaries.

Nadare, unlike Bahlavan and Khvarenah, was a simple human-sized figure, lacking the proliferation of the former or the enormity of the latter. The strikes she dealt were bound by the constraints of space and distance. Even with the sharpest blade, it was impossible for her to cleave through a wide area with a single swing.



"It is exceedingly arduous to be a hero," she declared. "All sorts of unreasonable things assail you, forming alliances against you, and you must confront them head-on, triumphing over them. That is why I strive to become the true one who completes that guy who will vanquish all these formidable foes."

She personified the absurdities of the world, the ultimate embodiment of absolute evil that stood as an obstacle in the path to a new world. This was Nadare's ideal, her ultimate pursuit.

She was the enemy of all people under the '**First Heaven**', an indispensable piece in the grand story unfolding. In many ways, she held more sway than the main character himself.

When she became Nadare, her past was stripped away, her previous life erased along with its names and Commandments. Although she gained unparalleled power compared to her previous self, there was an undeniable void in her life. Yet, the burning desire to believe in a place beyond this torturous existence continued to fuel her.

"I am the Demon King, 'Everyone's Demon King.'"

She yearned for the whole world to acknowledge that nothing could be changed without surpassing her. She sought to live and die as such an existence, proving that even she had an irreplaceable role to play.

"Now what? If this continues, 'unluckily,' your heart will stop."

Her words were a blend of hope and reprimand as she extended her hand to Magsarion, whose body contorted in agony. Given the circumstances, it was only natural for her to urge him to push through, considering her own disposition. However, Nadare couldn't afford to be complacent.

Despite appearances, she was fighting with all her might. The collapse of causality unfolded beyond her control, leaving her uncertain of when, how, or what would occur. Thus, Magsarion's next move was beyond the scope of any script. For a brief moment, it could have been mistaken for a suicidal act.

"What?"

Caught off guard by the unexpected counterattack, the eldest Demon King staggered backward, stepping on his own feet. The sword strikes that clung to her transformed into a relentless black whirlwind.

"This...!"

The situation shifted suddenly, catching her off guard, and she found herself swallowed by the raging assault. The crucial point to remember was that she was not alone.

"No... really? You audacious child, you truly are!"

The realization dawned upon her, and she perceived Magsarion's true nature. By defying the Fractured World's inherent failure and embracing self-destruction, he had reversed the phenomenon. In essence, he turned the blade against himself, convalescing around a state of **Sin**. It was a feat that seemed far too audacious and desperate. The concept made sense in theory but executing it without hesitation was a colossal psychological hurdle.

"What will you do if I do this?"

As Nadare unleashed the boundaries of collapse, Magsarion, without hesitation, pierced his own chest. It was a move that no one with human consciousness could easily fathom, and yet he pressed on.

"You said you were coming for me."

With a dark voice, his drawn sword closed in on Nadare, this time with a legitimate intent to kill.

"Then try to catch up with me."

Once again, the Fractured World reversed the course of cause and effect. The twisted sword flashes threatened a self-destructive trajectory, only to halt midway and return to their original path. Nadare, barely managing to evade, retreated.

She marveled at Magsarion's speed of thought, toggling between deactivation, activation, and deactivation once more. In less than an instant, their swift transitions birthed the most peculiar attack and defense the world had ever seen.

When Magsarion went on the offensive, he inflicted self-inflicted wounds. When he became the target, he plunged himself into the Demon King. Yet, amidst the flurry of movements, his sword tip grazed Nadare every few dozen exchanges.

Gradually, the frequency increased.

Both combatants stood on equal ground, their battles challenging due to the uncertainty of the other's mind.

Whether Nadare employed the Fractured World or Magsarion directed his killing intent towards himself or the enemy, it was impossible to discern their next moves. The luxury of reading each other's intentions had evaporated. The contest had transformed into a race of thoughts and reactions.

The heretical warrior, akin to a beast consumed by fury, surged forward, taking the lead in this intricate dance.

In the blink of an eye, the initially marginal disparities stacked against Nadare, placing her at a disadvantage. Magsarion had already impaled himself over a hundred times, yet his storm-like momentum showed no signs of relenting. On the contrary, it intensified, spiraling towards an incalculable phenomenon.

"Your body is already..."

Just as Nadare let out a shuddering groan, Magsarion's all-out upper slash struck her forehead. It was the same sword that cleaved through Bahlavan, severed Khvarenah, and dispatched Kaikhosru and Sirius with a single stroke.

Even though Nadare survived the onslaught, she bled for the first time.

In a world devoid of colors other than black and white, the contrasting scarlet appeared like a confetti dance signaling the end of dualism. Since becoming Nadare, she had no memory of shedding blood. Therefore, more captivated by the sight of the wound itself than the pain it caused, she wiped her forehead and gazed at the vivid hues staining her fingers.

Her subsequent exhale carried a hint of solace, as if reminiscing amidst the confusion. She softly murmured her thoughts.

"But you... you've long since lost everything. Under that armor, there must be nothing..."

Magsarion possessed no physical body.

That was the reason why no attack, no matter how mighty, could ever end his existence. He had transformed into an immutable concept, something beyond comprehension.

"Was it when you fought Bahlavan that triggered it? You had been gradually deteriorating long before that, but defeating him was the turning point."

"And what if it was? It's none of your concern."

Though Magsarion responded curtly, he did not refute Nadare's observation. In fact, as she had suggested, during the battle with Bahlavan, he had pushed his armor's power beyond its limits.

Consequently, the armor devoured his ego entirely, reducing him to a mere tool in service of its intended purpose.

Even now, beneath the armor, only a swirling black flame of darkness remained. The tangible Magsarion no longer existed.

He stood there, devoid of regret, solely fulfilling his significance.

What, then, constituted immutability for him?

While he had once declared to Bahlavan that he would remain undefeated throughout his life, it was merely a premise, a means to an end.

The truth remained shrouded in mystery.

Perhaps, this was the final opportunity to unravel it.

Magsarion, who had failed to deliver the finishing blow to Nadare, now sought to uncover the essence of his opponent. Both combatants halted their attacks, creating a space for dialogue as they maintained a cautious distance.

"The **Gudou**, you know what they say about it? It's not a law that spreads outward like the **Hadou**, but the ultimate convergence of the individual within. It's not about shaping the world according to your desires, but rather about defining yourself in relation to the world.

"If one pursues the path of the **Gudou**, they become a universe condensed within a human. Bahlavan was close to achieving it, but he fell short, not due to lack of power, but because of inherent flaws within the system."

"Are you responsible for those flaws?" Magsarion questioned, his voice tinged with suspicion.

In response, Nadare offered a smile— not one of superiority, but rather a self-mocking expression filled with shame.

Nadare, being a **Sensory** that embodied the struggle between good and evil, carried the weight of the Cardinal **Commandment**— the Great **Collapse**. In other words, she was the only pseudo-**Gudou** God allowed in this universe.

"Well, I've added my own **Commandment** to it, but in reality, I'm not so different from my predecessors. I simply desire to become a true Demon King," Nadare confessed, her words reflecting a sense of longing and aspiration.

However, in this universe, no matter how skilled one may be, mastering the nature of the **Gudou** is impossible. The only way to achieve it is through the form of a "Nadare." And since the **Hadou** governs the ability to alter the structure of the universe, those who seek the **Gudou** path are destined for disappointment.

"If Bahlavan had defeated me, he would have become the next Nadare. I've always felt sorry for him, and you made it easier for him when he was trapped like that. But I'm not sure if it truly saved him. With your sword, you eliminated all the **Hadou** candidates who could have changed the stage," Nadare reflected, her voice carrying a tinge of sorrow.

Nadare's extraordinary strength stemmed from her position atop the realm of the Gods, albeit in a pseudo-Godly manner.

Despite her modesty, the dual Commandments she possessed brought her closer to the ultimate goal than any of her predecessors.

"I want to be a Demon King. The greatest and final barrier, defeated by the true hero who will change the world. Because I prayed so with my soul, I just had to know what Magsarion's immutability became. In or out, the failure of the **Gudou**, seeking or conquering, the ascendancy of the **Hadou**— if it is the former, I cannot afford to lose decisively, and if it is the latter, I will be glad to be defeated. But as Varhran described it, the way of the wicked warrior seems to be different from either of them."

As Nadare carefully reviewed the information she had accumulated thus far, a hypothesis began to form in her mind.

"You can't be serious," she exclaimed, unable to fathom the implications.

"Do you mean to say that your immutability is a form of **Sin**?" she questioned Magsarion, awaiting his response with bated breath.

However, he remained silent, his thoughts veiled behind a curtain of contemplation. In that profound stillness, Magsarion reached a profound conclusion—one that challenged the very fabric of this world.

He realized that those who mindlessly danced to the tunes of **Avesta**, oblivious to its consequences, and those who recognized the wrongness of it but were powerless to effect change were equally burdened with **Sin**.

With astonishing audacity, he embraced these flaws and, in doing so, forged a system of punishment that embodied Sin itself. It was as if he sought to amalgamate the principles of **Gudou** and **Hadou**, combining their strengths to compensate for the shortcomings of both.

‘If this were indeed the path of **Meifu Madou**, a journey to transform oneself into the very incarnation of hell, it would entail a chilling reality.’

According to Magsarion's twisted logic, every individual is tainted with **Sin**. As a result, he would mercilessly extinguish every life, drawing them into his grasp, and construct a world where punishment befitting their transgressions would be exacted. It was a concept both fierce and horrific, yet strangely fair and unequivocal.

In such a world, regrets would dissipate, for the system was not rooted in irrationality. It could never be described as virtuous or righteous, but by perpetuating evil with evil, the promise of retribution would inevitably materialize.

It formed an unending chain of mutual slaughter, a law designed to eradicate the heresy of surrendering while in a position of becoming the winner.

As fear and excitement entwined within Nadare's heart, her very core quivered.

This hypothesis struck a chord deep within her being, resonating with a profound truth. Yet, in embracing it, she couldn't help but feel that it would entail stripping the Demon Kings of their purpose, robbing them of their ordained roles.

If Magsarion's future was to shoulder the burden of all the world's evil, then her own reason for existence would be shaken to its core. Perhaps, in the end, Magsarion himself would meet his demise, fading away into oblivion, thereby becoming no different from a replacement for Nadare.

Even as her rational mind resisted, unable to fully embrace the notion, Nadare found herself inexplicably drawn to it.

Her being was thrust into a state of disarray, as though she had been cast into a desolate wasteland of ignorance.

“It’s too weak.”

Magsarion, in his enigmatic manner, merely referred to her hypothesis as "weak," neither dismissing it as wrong nor validating its completeness. In other words, her conjecture represented merely a glimpse, a fraction of the larger truth lurking at the periphery of understanding.

“**Sin** is it? **Sin**... I see. I now know your essence.”

“What you— ”

Nadare's core shook as Magsarion gently and directly pierced her soul, causing her voice to tremble as she clung to him.

"You want me to unleash my wrath upon you, don't you?" Magsarion questioned, his voice filled with condemnation. "I will pass judgment. I will bring you punishment. I won't allow filth to roam freely. I interpreted it that way because it is what you desire. You spoke of the duties of a Demon King, but deep down, you simply want the freedom to do as you please."

His words resonated with a profound anger that lay at the core of everything. The primary motive was to follow that intense emotion above all else.

"I am..."

Magsarion began, intending to unravel the mystery of his opponent but, in the process, revealing his own truth. Nadare stood there, shocked yet feeling as if she had regained a part of herself that had long been suppressed. It wasn't that she had concealed her true feelings or feigned them. She hadn't forgotten or changed her mind either.

"I was simply crushed by the overwhelming weight of the name 'Nadare,' forced to abandon the person I once was. I was a helpless, pitiful loser, the daughter of the **Daeva**. But I prayed with fervor, with pride, as my insect-like existence demanded."

She had fervently prayed, yearning to be an indispensable force, surpassing the role of a mere protagonist. Above all else, she couldn't forgive those who had forced her into this fate.

"I don't care about the world's fate. I would be satisfied if I could strike 'you'— who calculates everything— as hard as I can, whether it ends in my victory or crushing defeat," Nadare admitted, her voice resonating with conviction.

“Yes, that's right.....I'm not going to let **Truth**, Ahura Mazda, and Varhran win and get away with it. I want them to suffer and writhe screaming!”

Magsarion chuckled softly, facing the declaration of war that emanated from the depths of her being.

"I agree with you. I don't mind that kind of feeling."

A shiver coursed through Nadare's entire being, an electrifying sensation that surpassed even the intensity of the flames of her conviction. A surge of joy overwhelmed her, causing her body to tremble.

"My name is..."

Nadare's words were on the brink of taking shape, just one step away from becoming a reality.

Yet, there was no hint of disappointment— rather, anticipation welled up within her.

‘The moment I can say this, I know my wish will come true,’ she thought to herself.

‘I may be narrow-minded and foolish, unable to comprehend the intricate schemes of those above me. But that doesn't matter. I can believe— purely and unwaveringly. No matter what conspiracies lurk at the world's end, I cannot bear the thought of them manipulating the man standing before me. No matter who they are, they cannot mold him.’

"I see your immutability! Everyone possesses it, yet everyone's is different. Because you lack a face, it extends to all ends— an anarchic, outrageous energy!" Nadare exclaimed, her voice resounding with conviction.

The true nature of this energy was **Nothingness**— not an illusion of emptiness, but a dense and massive amalgamation where scorching heat and absolute zero intertwined.

Within Magsarion's core, a dark explosive substance akin to chaos detonated, swirling with the collective essence of **Nothingness**.

**Ignorance (無知)** symbolizing the nameless individuals dancing to **Avesta**.



**Powerlessness (無力)** of those who had fallen while attempting to resist.

A **Ruthless (無情)** sword who destroys them and ignores any criticism rushing forward without remorse or shame.

A **Villainous (無頼)** heart that dared not fear the Gods.

A **Reckless (無謀)** way of life that disregarded gains and losses.

**Indifferent (無関心)** to the circumstances of others.

Yet possessing **Unparalleled (無尽)** insight to approach the truth.

An infinite killing intent driving him to the edge of **Infinity (無辺)**.

A destroyer of various orders, an inexorable force that repelled everything, from feeble moralities to cosmic laws.

There's no doctrine to make him submit, the concept specialized in eradicating external pressure is **faceless (無貌)**, **formless (無形)** and therefore, **invincible (無敵)**.

Magsarion emanates such an overwhelming power that Nadare perceives him as a figure capable of accomplishing the unimaginable.

She recognized the folly of projecting her own selfish desires onto him, yet she couldn't help but be consumed by envy and awe, yearning for his unwavering resolve.

"Devour me, Magsarion, consume my fury, my very identity..."

Driven by her plea, Nadare charges forward, and **Nothingness** responds in kind.

She hurls herself into the swirling tempest of his sword, harmonizing with the euphoria of spilt blood.

"May it etch itself upon your blade, Magsarion! I long to become the immutable piece that completes this man."

‘Everyone’s Demon King,’ without exception, utters this prayer, activating the unparalleled Fractured World— a manifestation she will unleash for the final time in her existence.

A **Collapse** ensues.

The fundamental laws of the universe contort and rearrange themselves, yielding to the utmost extent possible.

All to pave the way for Magsarion's journey along the **Meifu Madou**, propelling him toward his coveted destination.

In simpler terms, it was about clearing the path ahead.

It wasn't about removing obstacles, but rather illuminating the darkness like a bonfire on a pitch-black night.

Nadare understood that Magsarion was a man who would never falter under any circumstances, which is why she desired him to take the most optimal course of action. She had absolute faith and no reservations about it.

"And that's why I fell in love with you."

Hence, it was inevitable that he would extend an invitation to her, she had no reason to complain, only to fulfill her duty according to her ideals.

"Now is the time for us to pave the way to the place we've always dreamed of!"

Nadare's voice resounded with clarity as she brandished her twin blades like wings soaring into the future.

"Let's go!"

Simultaneously, the ship trembled. As if rewinding time, they embarked on a series of teleportation's to the primary battlefields where the eternal conflict between good and evil raged.

Perhaps, it was a reproduction of Magsarion's journey, tracing the path that this ‘ship’ (Angra Mainyu from the **Age of Zero**) had once taken to reach its destination— **Naraka**.

Their first destination was an ordinary planet within the atmosphere. It was a typical world with a few million inhabitants leading idyllic lives. They gazed upward at the peculiar ship that materialized amidst the clouds, pumping their fists and cheering.

Naively, without questioning, they sensed that a final battle unfolded within the mysterious vessel above them and fervently prayed for Magsarion's triumph. Amidst this scene of normality, one anomaly stood out.

The unassuming townscape directly beneath the 'Angra Mainyu' had vanished, leaving a void at its center. It was as if a colossal spoon had scooped up the land and relocated it elsewhere. Though it didn't resemble a natural geological formation, it bore no signs of destruction either.

"This is your home," Nadare whispered softly as their blades intertwined.

"I won't offer any clumsy explanations. Just acknowledge and comprehend where you come from and where you're headed."

Their blades clashed once more, resolute and unwavering.

Magsarion's bones creaked under the pressure of Nadare's sword, yet he paid it no mind. Instead, he dreamt a 'peaceful' vision steeped in pain and fear. He exerted every ounce of his being, zealously slaughtering all, even yearning for his own demise as he teetered on the edge of extinction.

As if to declare, "Now is the time to fulfill the duties of the Demon King I have set for myself."

"More, more, more... It can't end like this. If you can't withstand me, I'll kill you!"

Quicker than the twin blades could descend, Magsarion's strike met Nadare's torso. The blade plunged deep into her flesh, cleaving through ribs and reaching her lungs. Fresh blood gushed, drenching them both, yet their relentless pursuit persisted.

"You're hesitating. Try severing them both with a single blow!"

Enraged, she swung down, and a furious strike landed atop Magsarion's head. This time, he was bisected right down to the groin, yet no blood flowed. He screamed but swiftly rejoined his severed parts, his lethal sword responding in kind. The blade embedded in Nadare's chest twisted and cleaved diagonally. Her flank, gouged and torn, exploded into shrapnel that hurtled towards Magsarion. Yet, in an instant, the scene shifted once again.

The new space they entered was devoid of anything. No traces of ash or dust, only an expanse of utter darkness stretching across tens of thousands of light-years. However, it wasn't always this way.

Merely twenty years ago, there had undeniably been countless lives thriving here. Wahman Yast, the ancient Sacred Realm—the heart of a dead galaxy reduced to a barren wasteland after being consumed by Khvarenah.

"Brother!"

Magsarion slashed away the fragments of Nadare's flesh hurtling toward her, his sword dancing with unparalleled strength.

Nadare's body, a **Sensory of Avesta**, condensed the power of the universe, even if it was just a drop of blood. It was as potent as it appeared, equivalent to a billion stars colliding. Intercepting it was not only immensely challenging but also incredibly reckless, leaving the towering black form riddled with holes in the blink of an eye. However, no one expected him to falter because of it.

Nadare, of course, and 'everyone' knew.

**They could hear his heartbeat.**

The heartless blade would not waver.

It would continue its relentless onslaught, obliterating everything in its path, until even its echo faded away.

"Yes, follow the rhythm of your heart, Magsarion, and stand tall!"

The true Magsarion was the self-destructive element, the apoptosis of Ahura Mazda. Magsarion was naught but a cancerous cell birthed from the depths of the Divine Sword's darkness.

He was a meaningless and insignificant tool designed to slay his own mother, destined to vanish into oblivion upon her demise.

However, through the union with Priestess Quinn's womb, he fused with Varhran's lineage, and he too possessed a unique soul. Rife with the karma of an unending desire for bloodshed, he could choose who, how, and when to kill, even if he was manipulated by his mother.

The memory that sparked this desire, the foundation of his identity, was...

**"I will never be like my brother."**

I yearned to prove that I differed from him, even if we shared blood.

I would deny the path and the way my brother sought to tread.

Even if my very soul had been tampered with, its structure altered by Varhran, and even if my rebellious spirit was a part of his machinations, I am determined to overturn it all.

This pledge became Magsarion's third **Commandment**, or rather, the first **Commandment** etched into his being twenty years ago when he witnessed Varhran's death.

A killing intent born of his own volition, not as a result of being Ahura Mazda's apoptosis, not as a result of Varhran's unique nature from the '**Age of Zero**', but his own, immutable self.

Once realized, his sword would reach its completion, distinct and immutable. Like a shark drawn to the scent of blood, he would follow his brother's heartbeat to the far reaches of infinity.

With the strongest emotion tied to his origins surging within him, Magsarion bellowed with unbridled lawlessness. Paying no mind to the flying fragments of Nadare's flesh, he abandoned defense and sought to break through head-on, disregarding the continuous rain of flesh fragments.

"Good, this is what makes it worthwhile!" Witnessing his audacious actions, Nadare couldn't contain her joy.

Though she had caused countless failures, she believed that only this Fractured World, guiding Magsarion to his destiny, would succeed.

Nadare's **Commandment** was to make those she confronted and interacted with fall, entangling them in her own failures. She believed that, by doing so, 'those' who had toyed with her for so long would experience a more spectacular downfall than ever before.

"I don't care about the grand scheme she had in mind. Whatever it was, I would shatter it. Varhran and the others will pay for looking down on us from their lofty perches, pretending to be a transcendent. Perhaps I can't achieve it on my own, but with you..."

She cried out, an uproarious laughter emanating from the depths of her being, and swung down a sweeping slash that shattered the universe.

"Watch me, Mashyana! I won't let your regrets go to waste!"

In the next instant, the world shifted into the Sky Burial Sphere.

The breath of the Star Spirit had already faded away, and the petals dancing in the sky now counted down the seconds towards their annihilation. The faint, delicate pink wind held fleeting beauty, reminiscent of the elegance of a certain King's cherry blossom's fan.

Magsarion, having lost sight of the brother he was meant to slay, revisited his childhood on this battlefield and took a step forward, acknowledging his ignorance.

Who was his brother, truly?

The realization of his ignorance stemmed from the fact that those taking leading roles on this stage— Mashyana and another unknown figure (Zurvan)— were relatives.

In that sky of remorse, where love and hate intertwined, Magsarion found himself reflecting on his own existence.

Ultimately, he awakened from his delusions and began on the path to comprehend 'everyone'.

In his quest to diverge from his brother's path, Magsarion knew he had to uncover his true identity, so that he would never let Varhran escape from his grasp again.

It was a realization that eluded him, until he encountered a violent flying locust, wreaking havoc and annoying him to no end.

"You have unraveled the truth about Bahlavan and saved him. Oh, I'd like to think he was definitely saved."

In response to her words, the scene shifted once more.

The shattered and bloody garden stood devoid of life, the fierce waves of martial arts gusting like a tempest.

Magsarion, driven by his love for pure combat, had disregarded the laws of Avesta.

He believed that as long as he existed, he was eternal, his power transcending the mortal flesh.

The battle with Bahlavan became an opportunity for Magsarion to push his limits. It was the first time he defeated an opponent using his own unique killing style, having understood both sides of the enemy. In other words, he realized that he couldn't win using the same methods he had always employed.

"He must be proud to have catalyzed your transformation. I want to make it shine until time immemorial, so show me that you are the strongest!"

Nadare proclaimed gushing with glee at the scene of Magsarion's past, flying through his life as if it was her own.

Magsarion contemplated the idea of being invincible and unbeatable, an illusion that Bahlavan gave his entire being to. The followers of **Hadou**, the path of struggle, held the answer to achieving this ideal, so Bahlavan was forever eluded, never becoming whole.

But becoming one with Magsarion must be a reward of the highest honor, allowing him the right to take his immutability to partake in the cosmic slaughter, so one must imagine Bahlavan happy.

Amidst the escalating sword fights, Magsarion was transported to another planet, a small remnant compared to its former scale, yet vast enough to be a celestial body.

It was the result of a Star Spirit, once known as the Workshop of Annihilation. "The incomplete beauty of Khvarenah helped you understand the mechanisms of the world. Without it, you wouldn't be the person you are today, and that includes Varhran as well."

"Indeed."

Magsarion briefly agreed, prompting a broad smile from Nadare, amidst the gruesome bloodstains. There was a hint of jealousy in the air, somewhat refreshing in its own way.

"I want to create a 'beautiful' sword for you, so that you can retain even a little bit of the immutability that retains a fragment of the ideal Khvarenah sought."

The emanation of **Hadou**, rewriting the universe, a new world crafted by replacing God. Magsarion grasped this mechanism through his battle with the divine Khvarenah.

He understood that the **Avesta** governing the thoughts of **Ashavan** and **Drujvants** was not mere instinct, but a living being reigning at the top of the Divine Throne, coloring all creation with its own law.

It was a paradigm shift, a realization that if it was alive, he could kill it, propelled Magsarion to a higher realm.

But the **Meifu Madou** was not yet complete.

The mystery of Varhran, the one he most wanted to solve, remained untouched.

"The Princess of Murder gave me the clue of all people."

"Frederica has truly become lovely. Even you couldn't resist the innocence of a maiden in love. Did you consider her feelings, or did you pretend not to understand until the very end?"

"It's none of your business," Magsarion retorted, his voice slicing through the air.

Nadare's weapon shattered as he caught it, cutting her in two at the hilt. However, she did not fall. Gripping the white blade with bare hands, she resisted, her face contorted in pain. "You... must have long guessed the source of her love. But I won't ask you to reveal it. It's better if it remains unspoken. Even if the answer is obvious, it would leave the least amount of rambling, that's what she wanted. Isn't it a kind of gratitude for the lovely prophecy?"

‘One day, you will surely face the true enemy you sought,’ Magsarion recalled Frederica's dying words.

In order to fulfill Frederica's dying words, he swallowed her wish, creating it to be unyielding and immutable.

So no one had ever tarnished the love of the maiden.

The proof is that Frederica was sleeping with a peaceful expression on her face, her body remained peacefully within the halo of Khvarenah, unaffected by time's passage. More than three months had gone by, yet her form had not disintegrated. It was a testament to the trust placed in Magsarion by her.

“Everyone entrusted you with their dreams... Kaikhosru and Sirius, too.”

The scene shifted again. Roxanne, holding the head of the deceased dragon, and Alma, collapsed beneath the sky of the new continent.

They defied logic, the complete opposite to Magsarion, and the path to becoming a stronger existence was far from simple.

“Their competence had reached its extreme, and I had gained profound knowledge to unravel the truth.”

What remained was to discover what he did not yet know.

To confront a mystery with the knowledge of its existence was doable, but to be oblivious to it would leave it outside your grasp.

Magsarion's in-laws, Nahid and Sirius, held the missing pieces, and then Magsarion had clawed his way to the other side of the world.



He was now one step away from understanding who Varhran was and what he contained withing that swirling existence mixed with all and everything. It wouldn't be farfetched to that there was also his connection to 'Her.'

"So let me ask you, Magsarion..."

In that instant, the sword connecting them exploded, as if breaking from within. Nadare swiftly reached out, gripping the back of Magsarion's head, and forcefully pulled him back.

She, who wished to be the final fragment of the ship that sailed through space before the birth of Magsarion's universe, was about to fulfill her duty.

"How will you make me rage with emotion? Merely killing them would only cause them to laugh at you. I honestly believe in you, but tell me the means without tact. Only then will my torturous destiny be complete."

Magsarion, like a master architect, had deftly carved a fracture in the blueprint of "Her," altering the course of his own trajectory through the vast expanse of the Fractured World.

His actions were calculated, a precise incision in the fabric of destiny, leaving a scar that ran across the ice-like surface of the future.

The path he treaded was straight and unwavering, leading him towards the elusive answer he sought. Nadare, observing his unwavering determination, harbored no doubts about the clarity of his vision.

In this paradoxical realm, impossibilities dissolved, for Magsarion transcended the realm of frustration, surpassing his very limitations.

'I shall take pride in proclaiming that I have fulfilled my decisive role. To depart from this world, satisfied that I have played my part in shaping the completion of your journey...' Magsarion, a stoic figure, revealed no emotions in the face of Nadare's imminent collapse.

Time itself seemed to lose its grasp, as the concept of its passing became obscured within the distorted boundaries of the Fractured World.

At last, with unwavering villainy etched into his words, Magsarion broke the silence that had enveloped them, his voice carrying the weight of his resolve.

**"I have four commandments..."**

He continues gruffly, clearing his throat as if he was arrogantly boasting.

“Or rather, I plan to have them in the near future. As you witnessed earlier, I have a tendency to defy the laws of the world.”

"Then you are..."

Nadare's response held a cryptic quality, but she seemed to grasp the significance. After a brief pause, she shook her shoulders, conveying a sense of satisfaction.

"I see... I see... You got one over on me. But it's logical when you think about it... Yes, you truly got me, ha ha ha..."

"I will be unable to reach you," she said as a serene expression settled on her face.

Softly, with a touch of lingering hope, she whispered, "My name is Sita. I pray that you remember me."

With a triumphant air of assurance, she gently closed her eyes, radiating a profound sense of gratitude and reverence.

And thus, the irreversible **Collapse** commenced— a profound indicator that ‘Angra Mainyu’ had fulfilled its purpose from ages primordial, ensuring that ‘Nadare’ would never be born again.

## 6

In the control room, the ancient relic of the '**Age of Zero**' - Angra Mainyu, crumbled and showed signs of imminent demise. Amidst this chaos, Magsarion stood calmly, his gaze fixed on the ever-increasing number of monitors that filled the room.

The number of monitors in the control room, large and small, was constantly increasing, filling the entire space. In addition, the images that appeared on them were changing at a dizzying pace in less than a moment's time. At first glance, the frenzy seems to be a symptom of a malfunction, but Magsarion knew better.

He recognized it as a deliberate act, a souvenir left by Nadare, or rather, Sita.

To him, this frenzied display was a shortcut, a way to reach the optimal solution. She tells ‘everyone's savior,’ no Magsarion, with knowledge about the countless beings inhabiting different



The cruelty of it all, the merciless puppetry, was unbearable for an immutable man like him to ignore.

"This sudden turn of events is quite intriguing," he remarked, chuckling once again.

"You all equally deserve death... and so I shall be your savior."

Another bout of laughter erupted, shattering Melek Taus's limit.

The helmet, unable to withstand the vibrations of his voice, shattered, signifying the end for 'her,' yet, it also brought liberation from the ruthless master. The purpose for 'her' existence had ceased to exist, and thus, 'her' death was permitted.

There was no need for Magsarion to hide his face anymore.

Everyone who knew Varhran was dead.

'He' was nowhere to be found, as 'he' was physically erased from existence.

Only a blank face remained, a chaotic void swirling in unfathomable darkness.



I vowed never to be like my brother.

Magsarion had sworn never to become like his brother, but this **Commandment**, the very core of his being, was both steadfast and ambiguous, a vague and empty bondage that was both full and devoid at the same time.

He had never truly understood the true nature of Varhran, and without that clarity, he struggled to define his own behavior. The line between breaking the **Commandment** remained blurred, and thus, no rewards could be expected. At the very least, he had not gained any power to kill.

Yet, it would be incorrect to say that these years had been wasted.

Over two decades, Magsarion had undergone a gradual transformation, shedding the remnants of his brother's visage.

I despised the resemblance we shared.

I yearned to sever even the ties of blood we had in common, forsaking my flesh.

From a young age, he had been burdened with expectations of being a replacement for the Hero.

Breaking the **Commandment** resulted in ambiguous punishment, but each time Alma's longing reached him, he experienced excruciating pain. And not just her, he continued to walk on the edge of this tightrope because of the favor he received from 'everyone.'

And so, he wore a mask, defying the expectations of a Hero, sowing the seeds of his distinctiveness from Varhran, all in an attempt to breathe freely.

Thus was the truth of Magsarion's existence.

Day by day, his physical form diminished, a consequence of the quid pro quo of the Commandment combined with the armor's function, systematically eliminated every aspect that bore any resemblance to Varhran.

Ever since his fateful encounter with Bahlavan, he had allowed this transformation to continue, unable to halt its relentless progress.

But in truth, he had no desire to stop.

Finally, he had become a complete **Nothingness**, devoid of any tangible presence.

This idea may horrify other people, but to Magsarion, he felt an unprecedented sense of refreshment for the first time in his life.

The only lingering concern was the fact that his sword had been shattered in his battle with Sita. But that was a trivial matter in the grand scheme of things.

His gaze swept across the room, landing on a longsword propped against a corner. Magsarion recognized it immediately—it was the same sword once wielded by Varhran. Obtaining it would undoubtedly violate his **Commandment**, but he approached it nonchalantly, without a trace of worry.

He resolved that if he unsheathed the sword, he would not become a mere imitation of his brother. With a forceful grip on the hilt, he exerted all his strength, only to be met with an equally fierce resistance.

The sword seemed to protest, stubbornly refusing to budge, its blade merely a few centimeters deep in the floor. Magsarion snickered at the sword's defiance. He cared not for such trivialities and simply employed brute force to extract it.

Perhaps a scream echoed through the air, but he paid it no mind.

A surge of scorching heat emanated from the hilt, yet Magsarion remained unfazed.

With a single hand, barely exerting any effort, he wrenched the Divine Sword free, its release accompanied by a gurgling sound.

As this relentless act of tyranny unfolded, Magsarion himself underwent a transformation.

From the darkness that once consumed his neck and upward, a faint outline emerged.

Shadows materialized, revealing the faint contours of eyes and a nose.

Gradually, the **Nothingness** gave birth to cascading flames, became long hair that curled in a frightening manner.

Thin lips twisted into a grotesque shape beneath the bony bridge of a nose.

Ah, those eyes—piercing and intense. The sharp arch of his eyebrows.

How was it possible that a man with such a strikingly handsome face, possessing an overall balance of perfection, could also invoke such terror?

The juxtaposition between beauty and horror was an enigma in itself.



Magsarion stood, an exact replica of Varhran. And yet, everything about him was different.



Varhran possessed an abnormal spirit, a childlike clarity that shone with an indescribable brilliance. Though his true intentions were often elusive, there was an undeniable charm to his existence, an air of reliability that emanated from his very being.

In stark contrast, Magsarion was an open book, easily comprehensible to anyone who encountered him. There was no room for ambiguity in his transformed appearance. He had embraced a semblance of simplicity, a deliberate shift in his countenance.

Magsarion understood the purpose behind this change, akin to the magnetic pull between polar opposites. It served as a guiding light on the path to discovering the long-sought heartbeat, the true identity of his brother, which lay just around the corner.

Now, wielding the Divine Sword, Magsarion gave voice to the pure prayer that resided within the depths of his heart.

**"I shall kill everyone."**

And thus, a desolate landscape of carnage rises anew as Magsarion embarked on a new era of relentless slaughter.

## **Chapter 16: Remorseless Paradise of the Fallen**

### **1**

As a child, I cherished the enchanting fairy tales my mother wove into my bedtime stories. There was a common motif in those tales, one that sought to discipline unruly children.

‘If you don't do as you're told, a faceless monster will eat you.’

It was a common kind of warning. It is a common practice, regardless of time period or region, to suggest a terrifying presence in order to discipline children who are not yet ready to listen to it.

Curiously, I found myself drawn to the troublesome character who proved convenient for parents but exasperating for children. I yearned for more, begging my mother to share further details about this elusive being.

Annoyed by my contrary attitude, she resorted to narrating the stories in an ostentatious manner, attempting to scare me into submission.

"No one knows the origins of this creature," she would proclaim with dramatic flair.

"He came into existence eons ago, long before the birth of my mother's grandmother and her grandmother's grandmother. A unique and mysterious monster, the only thing in the world that we don't understand. He is neither white nor black, for even 'God' despises him," my mother continued, heightening the mystique.

"Thus, he perpetually harbors anger, ceaselessly seeking to devour everything it encounters. Anything consumed by its insatiable appetite is transformed into a distorted semblance of itself. He puts everything into his stomach and makes them into something they are not. Into something like him. Once you lay eyes upon this monster, your fate is sealed. No amount of tears or apologies can ever garner its forgiveness.

Though my mother's theatrical tone and laughter sent shivers down my spine, I remained undeterred. In fact, her stories only fueled my desire to catch a glimpse of this monster.

I felt a strange empathy towards it.

"Are you lonely?" I wondered aloud.

"If I were to befriend this monster, could it find solace and cease its wrath against us?"

My mother was taken aback by my innocence, momentarily at a loss for words. Wanting to maintain the conversation, I posed another question.

"But how do we know this monster truly exists? Won't encountering him mean the end?"

In response, my mother sighed, then pointed towards the bedroom window, her gaze fixed on the night sky beyond.

"Look at that."

I followed her gesture, yet I struggled to decipher her intentions. Offering my sincere interpretation, I remarked, "The sky is full of countless stars, isn't it?"

"Yes, but there were even more in my mother's time. Your grandmother would attest to the same. Do you understand?"

My mother's face expressed a mix of awe and amusement.

"Well, it's nothing for you to worry about. Just make sure not to stay up too late," she retorted, her tone tinged with a wry smile.

"Okay. But please, continue telling me about the monster," I pleaded.

"Yes, yes, that was our agreement. I understand."

For my mother, any means to dissuade her daughter from misbehavior sufficed. It wasn't that I behaved well out of fear; rather, I sought to unravel the mysteries surrounding the monster. Thus, a promise was formed, and from then on, I was showered with nightly tales of the faceless monster.

These stories depicted the annihilation of a kingdom with a single gust of wind, mountains vanishing, oceans evaporating, and not a blade of grass or tree surviving his passage. There were tales of a mighty Demon King of the Black, boasting invincibility, only to be consumed helplessly. And there were accounts of an army united by hope, vanishing in the blink of an eye.

In general, the faceless monster emerged as an overwhelming and insurmountable catastrophe—a menacing beast defying human control, an incomprehensible transcendental anomaly.

Realistically, the stars in the night sky were gradually disappearing year after year. It became apparent that these legends were born from this phenomenon, explaining why they had acquired the essence of fairy tales.

Undoubtedly, fear gripped everyone, my mother included. Perhaps she wished to convince herself that this mysterious phenomenon was inconsequential, adopting it as a tool to discipline her daughter. By doing so, she might have hoped to trivialize the impending calamity and find solace amidst the chaos.

Or perhaps, in my yearning to befriend the monster, she detected a glimmer of hope, a desperate longing for something beyond the confines of a child's imagination.

I cannot ascertain her motives now, for when I grew older and ventured to the outer lands as part of my people's fight, my mother disappeared along with my home planet.

The faceless monster is undeniably real. Warriors engaged in the struggle between good and evil, black and white, all recognized its existence. None had ever seen it—humans lacked the capability, even with the super-clairvoyance of Star Spirits.

But he is there.

Something swirled within the vast expanse of the universe, surpassing even the laws of 'God.' He ceaselessly traversed, relentless in his endeavor to engulf everything. His destructive power surpassed simple annihilation or extermination.

Should a star 10,000 light-years away be extinguished, we would witness its demise only after a span of 10,000 years. But there was no such delay when it was eaten by the faceless one. The logic behind this phenomenon eludes us, as he appears capable of transcending both time and space, rendering them null and void beneath its blade.

Truly, this was an act of divine power that defied our common sense. No countermeasure existed against such a force.

Pondering the situation, one might naturally succumb to despair, whether it be through lamentation or rage. Inevitably, resignation seemed the only conceivable outcome, regardless of the path one's heart followed.

Yet, I questioned my own motivations.

I had lost all those friends I swore to protect and the enemies I sought to defeat. And still, I traversed the desolate wilderness, bereft of companionship. It felt as though I was beckoning him. As if I yearned for his arrival, eager to witness his presence.

A peculiar buoyancy permeated my being, best described as 'anticipation'

Soon, I would meet the faceless monster.

The mere thought of this encounter set my heart ablaze with anticipation. The universe was vanishing rapidly, the black-and-white battlefield shrinking to its final vestiges. And here I stood, fighting on the last remaining star. Before I knew it, there was no one around me and I was left behind looking for the moment I longed for.

As a child, I reveled in the fairy tales my mother spun in my bedtime stories. The unidentified monster held an inexplicable allure, both mesmerizing and unbearable. Of course, I resented him for snuffing out the lives of my mother, my friends, and countless others.

My heart brimmed with curses, a barrage of questions demanding to know his purpose in wreaking such havoc upon us.

Yet, concurrently, I envied all those who had vanished.

I was convinced they had transformed into fragments of a fairy tale, eternally enshrined within his story.

"I adored the tale of the monster, which required the cooperation of black and white to overcome it," I mused.

Where the storm of facelessness blows, a miracle occurs.

It was a story where we, indoctrinated from birth, to slay those of a different hue, discovered the true purpose of life for the first time.

"It is an enthralling tale of a boy awakening within the belly of a monster, embarking on an adventure to escape."

Why are we alive?

What compels us to seek life?

In embracing our true emotions, unearthing a self previously unknown, we unabashedly proclaimed our answer to existence.

Death may have been the inevitable conclusion, but it didn't seem a heartless one.

"Because it tells me that this is the kind of guy you are. I understand."

For he held us in his embrace, his radiant presence eternally casting a shadow over the heavens, forever immutable.

Merciless and ferocious, yet he bore the aura of a savior.

"We possess hearts and souls! We are not mere puppets, nor instruments for the convenience of others!"

"I longed for this recognition. Only the monster, defying the laws of this world, could acknowledge our essence."

"In essence..." I trailed off, my body entwined, teetering on the precipice of the heavens, until "something" pierced me.

It was not an embrace that ensnared me, but rather a piercing thrust. And yet, the blade that impaled my chest exuded warmth, its sharpness replaced by an indescribable serenity.

"Hence, regardless of what others may say, I was finally embraced within this lawless universe," I whispered, gazing into a face where the essence of **Nothingness** converged.

"You have become for my sake."

"I missed you. I yearned for you. The farce of my insignificance, gradually decaying into nothingness, frightened me. Subsequently, the overwhelming loneliness threatened to drive me to madness... when I was abandoned on the edge of the stage, vanishing from sight."

Black and white, men and women alike beseeched the immutable sword to embrace them. They believed that by being consumed by it, they could validate their existence within the realm of 'Her' law.

Now, it stood before us.

Finally, I had encountered the one I yearned for so ardently.

My monster.

My hero.

"Keep me within you," I whispered, my voice trembling, as I beheld its countenance for the last time.

In his face, where **Nothingness** converged, I discovered absolute salvation— for I knew for what purpose, I had lived so far.



The journey defied the boundaries of time, a passage that could only be described as an extraordinary odyssey. It was a journey of relentless speed, a torrential rush that propelled him forward with an unstoppable force.

Throughout this time, he bore many names—Evil Sword, Evil Shadow, Faceless Darkness, the Beast of Oblivion.

Revered and feared by many, some cursed him as a spawn of hell, while others hailed him as a savior.

Regardless of the opinions held by others, one undeniable truth prevailed—he was a harbinger of death.

In every moment of this indescribable journey, he was killing, killing, and killing, methodically dismantling and obliterating every individual he encountered.

And now, as the last vestiges of life vanished from the universe, the universe turned into a wilderness of slaughter, a universe in which only he stands, waiting for the battle that would determine everything.

"Come forth," his voice echoed silently, a chilling call to those who had yet to reveal themselves. "You're next."

Unyielding and resolute, his senses knew that the end was not yet within sight. The pivotal moment of his journey was about to commence.

The throne of God is located at the very source and origin of all existence, residing in a realm where the supernatural is superimposed over the abstract.

It was a realm accessible only to those who possessed the requisite qualifications - a mastery of the **Hadou**, birthing their own unique law and a level of strength surpassing even that of the current God.

However, Magsarion fell short on the former requirement. Though his power was formidable, he lacked the capacity to reach the realm of **Hadou**, simply because he had already deviated from the path. So the omnicide of the universe served as his bridge, a means to overcome this limitation.

By eliminating every being, he sought to concentrate the universe's events into a singular point. It was akin to hunting prey by closing off every escape route—an elegant and brutal strategy that only he could execute with such unwavering determination.

No future **Heaven** of the Divine Throne would witness a feat comparable to Magsarion's, a testament to the unprecedented power of the **Meifu Madou**. Perhaps she herself did not intervene in the process simply because she wanted to witness it.

Standing alone in the wilderness of carnage, a voice emerged from nowhere and everywhere.

A voice of divine authority, a duality that laughed and lamented, congratulated and scorned.

And then the world turned.

**“Standing alone in the wastelands of carnage... huh? This is the pinnacle of martial art.”**

**"I am glad that a man like you was born under my law."**

Suddenly, Magsarion found himself in an extraordinary space that transcended all boundaries.

Black and white, blue and red, light and dark, front and back— every single contrasting, conflicting, and opposing forces and phenomena, concepts, and everything else of the universe converged here.

It was a grand tapestry of interwoven patterns, shifting and transforming like a kaleidoscope. Colors stretched infinitely, yet nothing existed independently.

Confirmation was unnecessary; this was the undeniable truth of the universe. The magnificent tapestry, resplendent and grotesque, vividly represented the nature of ‘Her.’

‘she is incomparable to any enemy I have ever faced. No wonder. We all were just a pattern, literally a clump of cells to this nasty ‘God.’”

The colossal scarlet and azure eyes that materialized in the air embodied her essence.

**"I am what you call Avesta, the prayer, the Hadou, the look of madness and love that imposed the never-ending struggle on this world. I am the epitome of dualism, where white represents love, courage, bonds, and ideals, while black revels in violence, ridicules the weak, and tramples upon them. But you can call me Shinga (Truth)."**

Good and evil, hope and despair - **Shinga** encompasses them all, indifferent to the notions of positivity and negativity. No. In the first place ‘Her’ judgment lacks a heart, something that was fundamentally missing from her.

Therefore **Shinga** was able to establish a paradoxical existence in a realm of supreme dimensions, the pinnacle of a world where **Shinga**’s cosmic ego imbued all of creation with ‘Her’ essence. She was an undoubtedly an inhabitant of the divine domain, radiating an awe-inspiring and terrifying majesty. Even after annihilating ‘Her’ cells(everyone)— the entirety of existence— ‘Shinga’s’ power remained undiminished.

Yet, Magsarion remained resolute in his perception of her.

“The first thing that comes to mind is the fact that the two of you are finally in the same room after so many years. It is my duty to entertain him with pleasure.”



Unexpectedly, the gaze of 'God' veered aside, as if acknowledging the presence of a third party. **Shinga** soon spoke of a man forgotten by all.

**"Unfortunately, I have a prior engagement. Let me attend to that first."**

Adorned with a lean physique, a gun in one hand, and a distinct wide hat...

**"Have you concocted a scheme to make me admit my mistake, Zurvan?"**

"Of course not."

A wry smile graced the man who had seemingly disappeared, his reply brimming with intrigue.

## 2

"...Zurvan."

Magsarion hesitated for a moment before uttering his name, his mind reeling from the unexpected turn of events. The person he had called out to appeared unusually cheerful, wearing a smile that seemed inappropriate given their acquaintance.

"It has been quite some time," he spoke, his voice filled with a hint of nostalgia. "I have stood by your side for a long while, you know. Did you not notice my unwavering support, always cheering you on?"

Silence lingered in the air as Magsarion processed the words. Zurvan's smile deepened, his satisfaction evident in his expression.

"Answer me. It's rather important. I feel uncomfortable."

Zurvan's smile deepened with satisfaction at Magsarion's short reply.

"Yes... you are undoubtedly correct. Since the moment you transformed into a child on Druj Nasu, you made a conscious decision to understand your opponents fully before striking. And when you slew Mashayana, it is impossible to claim you didn't know what was going on. Even if you had forgotten about me, the circumstances should have provided some clues. Your adaptability itself speaks volumes."

"I forgot someone?"

Magsarion's voice betrayed a tinge of confusion. Due to his perpetual sense of discomfort, Magsarion swiftly grasped the situation, comprehending it far quicker than anyone else could. Another individual would have remained ensnared in bewilderment, but not him.

“Because I wasn’t good enough, I made my little sister suffer terribly, but she will finally be rewarded a little with this. I will do it.”

Magsarion acknowledged, recognizing that Mashayana had been put on hold, in accordance with his **Commandment**. He possessed a vague understanding of the situation, but he set it aside momentarily, knowing that a missing piece of the puzzle would eventually reveal itself.

Logic dictated his thought process. It was inherent in Magsarion's nature to make sense of the period erased by divine authority. Therefore, he could already anticipate the subsequent developments.

"Were you engaged in some kind of game with ‘Her?’"

Zurvan's gaze lowered, his amusement evident.

“Well, yes I was.”

**Shinga** looked down with a twinge of amusement, the twill-patterned space surrounding them became imbued with waves of displeasure and melancholy, adding hues to the ever resplendent Divine Throne.

**"You shall prove your unwavering resolve, will you not? I have eagerly awaited this. Do not disappoint me."**

"Do you recall when you said you would die if I were right?" Zurvan asked with the air of his usual mischievousness.

**"Of course I do. And, naturally, I do not remember"**, **Shinga** responded with audacity.

In the depths of Zurvan's heart, a fiery determination blazed, fueling his audacious quest to transcend the confining shackles of existence, to become freer than anyone else. With resolute conviction, he defied the norm by embracing the forbidden path, forsaking the comfort of the **Commandments** that sought to confine his spirit. His love for Mashyana, the embodiment of his deepest desires, propelled him towards a life untethered, unbounded by the constraints of the black and white dualism.

Yet, as fate would have it, **Shinga**, the mysterious arbiter of destiny, denied him this cherished freedom. With an air of authority, she pronounced judgment upon his perceived transgression, demanding retribution for his defiance of denying her Law.

In the face of this unexpected verdict, Zurvan found himself bereft of doubt, as if his very soul had spoken and affirmed his chosen path. And yet, his true self, the essence buried deep within his soul, whispered a dissenting voice— a resounding "no."

The paradox gnawed at Zurvan's core, leaving him bewildered and conflicted.

Why did his innermost being oppose the decision he felt so unequivocally in his heart?

The answer eluded him, veiled in the enigmatic machinations of **Shinga** and the intricate tapestry of cosmic forces at play. And so, with his heart heavy and his spirit undeterred, Zurvan embraced his fate, prepared to face the consequences of his transgression. In this intricate dance between defiance and retribution, his journey towards true liberation had only just begun.

**“You are not an independent entity. You think you have accomplished something without realizing it, but the truth is that you are nothing more than a mere puppet.”**

What greater insult could there be?

The sting of it pierced Zurvan's very core, igniting a fierce determination within him. He knew, without a shadow of doubt, that he had to prove himself, regardless of his own desires or inclinations. It was an indomitable resolve that propelled him forward, unyielding in the face of a world that had erased him from its collective memory and records. He existed on the fringes, relegated to the realm outside the protective confines of recognition— a cruel fate that he refused to accept.

"I have come here solely to proclaim my true identity to the world and to revoke your unjust evaluation."

**"Come on, prove it. If possible."**

Zurvan's arm raised languidly, responding to **Shinga**'s urging gaze. The muzzle of the gun pointed directly at Magsarion. In hindsight, it made no sense at all. Zurvan detested **Shinga**, yet he felt gratitude towards Magsarion. Nonetheless, he made a peculiar and illogical choice.

Surprisingly, no one displayed astonishment. Not Zurvan, not Magsarion, and not even **Shinga**, who silently awaited the outcome.

Laughter and tears intermingled, as she accepted the situation naturally and peered into the future it would forge.

In essence...

"You understand my thoughts. With you, everything will be alright," Zurvan voiced, just as the sound of the gunshot reverberated. In that fleeting moment, he took action.

"You'll get your money's worth."

"I know."

"We have been in a similar situation before, trying to see who was faster," Magsarion reminisced, acknowledging their shared past.

However, in the present, he clearly surpassed Zurvan. With a single stroke of his sword, Magsarion cleaved through Zurvan, leaving him to crumble without a second thought.

He did not look back at the fallen **Ashavan**, severing all ties indefinitely. Though Magsarion's actions were devoid of sentiment, they carried a hint of respect.

Zurvan, mortally wounded but not instantly dead, experienced a strange sensation, as if Magsarion had directed his remaining time... as if he had entrusted the final moments to him. In doing so, Magsarion silently urged Zurvan to strike **Shinga** with genuine strength, releasing the shackles that bound him.

**"You really know how to ruin the mood."**

"Well, to you, it may seem that way," Zurvan replied.

Indeed, even as Zurvan lay sprawled on his back, he wore an unperturbed expression, shrugging off **Shinga**'s disdain. His characteristic fearlessness shone through at this critical juncture.

"It is unfair for the accused to bear the burden of proving their innocence. If you perceive me as a puppet, then it is you who must provide the evidence."

**"Fool. Proving one's innocence can be exceedingly difficult and, in some cases, impossible. Therefore, in principle, the accusing party must demonstrate 'I did it.'"**

"Quit beating around the bush, damn it! Reveal the cards you've been hiding."

**"Very well, I shall take your word for it. After all, it seems you understand what I speak of", Shinga responded with a pity-laden laughter, intensifying her assault.**

What is the truth about Zurvan?

What will was controlling him?

The revelations began to unfold like an intricately woven tapestry, each piece of information potent enough to render him asunder.

**"You bear a striking resemblance to someone who was once my companion. Your appearance, skills, and spirit... Yes, you are much like him. You are, without a doubt, similar to Nadare."**

A tactile **Sensory** of a transcendent. An unwilling agent. A troublemaker who has been placed in charge of the game with administrator privileges, irrespective of their own circumstance.

**"And the truth that binds you is far deeper than that of Nadare. If you question the source, not even I can answer your qualms. That thing, entity, amalgamation of [REDACTED], lies deeper within the Divine Throne, further away, tucked beyond the scope of the abyss."**

"I'm **Naraka** right, or at least a portion, right?"

**"Close. Similar, yet undoubtedly different. I would say it is not 'Naraka' but 'The Naraka.' Me and him are incompatible, but there are some things we seldom agree on. For example, he is interspersing himself within the Divine Throne at the opportune moment of each Heaven of his choosing. He is trying to create chaos, so that he can gather the people and train his soldiers to his whims."**

"Well, I'm for sure not doing anything that big."

**"Well, is that really the case?"**

Laughing with a hint of pity, **Shinga** piled on 'Her' onslaught.

**"You say the most you've done is to lead your sister to break her Commandment, and your miniscule actions haven't done much. But how about as a 'Sensory?' The game between 'Me' and 'Him,' which was supposed to last for seven generations, has given birth to an**

**unexpected outsider in the early stages of the game. As a result, your presence has been diminished, but you have not yet become free. Instead, you are more firmly bound as ‘His’ Sensory. Look back a little. When did you realize that you had become you? When, under what circumstances, did you realize that you were under the illusion that you were walking on your own independent path?”**

The answer to the perplexing question lay before them, clear as day.

The answer to the perplexing question lay before them, clear as day.

Zurvan himself admitted that his birth was far from ordinary, an anomaly that defied conventional understanding. But there was more to his story, a series of unexpected events that shaped him even further.

It was during the first battle to the death with Mashyana 20 years prior, the moment he believed he had met his demise, that something extraordinary unfolded.

Inexplicably, he found himself reborn as a human within the domain of the Sacred Realm. The Air Burial Sphere of his homeland witnessed the emergence of countless awakened individuals, an occurrence that held a profound significance.

A sense of curiosity and bewilderment gripped Zurvan as he pondered the cause behind these extraordinary events.

“You mean to say it coincides that it aligned with the activities of the heroes?”

The synchronicity between his birth and the awakening of his true self seemed too deliberate to dismiss as chance. The parallels between his birth and the awakening of Varhran's omniscience were strikingly apparent. It was as if the threads of destiny tightly intertwined the two moments, converging in a convergence of fate.

And when the inevitable end befell him, when he faced his ‘death,’ Zurvan could not escape the backlash that awaited him.

**“You see, Zurvan, the reason you, who was once dead, became anew, reborn if you may say.... was because you're a spare. As you are related to ‘The Naraka,’ you were made to be the spare of a hero.”**

Zurvan absorbed this revelation, his voice tinged with foolish disbelief.

"The crux lies beyond your comprehension. The hero stole your toys," he muttered.

**"I concede. It is beyond your understanding. Whether it was me, Varhran, or 'Him' pulling the strings, the fact remains that your 'free will' is nothing more than a fantasy, forever subject to repeating the same dreams, yielding to the eternal current", Shinga** interjected with a laugh that bore a hint of sympathy.

Just as **Shinga** had manipulated Ahura Mazda and Nadare, **'The Naraka'** wielded Zurvan as a pawn on this side of the game board.

Hence, the truth lay in the fact that a non-standard third party, Varhran, had disrupted their game and snatched away their pieces— Ahura Mazda and Zurvan.

The current circumstances exceeded even the Gods' plans. However, as **Shinga** had proclaimed, it mattered little.

The everlasting truth was that Zurvan, who sought freedom, had been naught but a puppet in the hands of higher powers, and his choice here only validated that...

**"Your choice in this situation is also a clear indication of that. It's a pity. As long as you can be seen as having failed to break free from being a 'puppet,' you will have to be punished according to your Commandment. If you are only a Sensory, a puppet, and a tool, then fulfill your significance appropriately."**

**Shinga** assured him, and once again exacted his punishment.

This time, however, it was not a mere erasure from the universe's memories, but transformed Zurvan into something entirely different, a fate that stripped away his very essence.

His life and pride, which he had cherished as his own, were gradually being replaced by 'Him' as if 'He' had possessed them from the beginning. It was a robbery of his being, a fate more harrowing than death itself. Even the strongest among men would struggle to endure such a torment, and the more one held onto their pride, the louder their screams of horror would echo.

Yet, despite the unimaginable ordeal of losing himself to oblivion, removed from the cycle of the universe, Zurvan remained unshaken. A resolute smile adorned his face, defying the imminent dissolution of his identity. It was as if he taunted, saying, "It is you who have truly lost."

"I despise... the power of belief that brings about miracles," he uttered with unwavering resolve. "It is nothing more than a hollow promise, a false law preached by the self-righteous **Ashavans**. I'm different."

It was not that he refused to acknowledge defeat nor relied on his faith to save him. But even so, the light in his eyes refused to fade.

"I have chosen what I wish to believe," he declared. "That, in itself, is the proof, you damned fool. Witness the outcome of this divine comedy! His victory is no different from my own!"

To strip away **Shinga**'s vindication, Zurvan argued that all those who looked down upon him must taste defeat. As long as he could contemplate and choose his own path within his mind, he maintained his unwavering conviction of triumph.

He placed his faith in his own belief. The order was irrelevant. He proudly proclaimed that he had already emerged victorious. Thus, this was not a setback but a reversal.

"With this outcome, I shall manifest the culmination of my beliefs, regardless of the order," he proudly asserted. "I have already won... Well then, go ahead and give it a try, Magsarion."

With a final act, he placed a cigarette between his lips, taking a long drag. The wandering **Ashavan** brought his journey to an end and embarked on the path of new beginnings. As the faint scent of purple smoke wafted in the air, Zurvan was irrevocably erased from this realm.

And in his stead, something else emerged.



In place of Zurvan, every face that had ever existed throughout the infinite ages of the **First Heaven** materialized.

They encircled the Divine Throne, their sheer multitude revealing the audacious challenger who dared to confront Magsarion before engaging with the Goddess of the **First Heaven**.

Varhran, the father and brother of Magsarion, stepped into the crevasse of the Throne, splitting into reality, a seemingly almost extraterrestrial deity.



At first, his form took the shape of an exclamation, "Ah, brother, my Rebounding Gale is destined to lose."

Then, he transformed into the blonde girl who had been his previous form's master.

"It has been a long time, brother, and my prophecy has come to fruition, hasn't it? At last, my winds of recrudescence defy the tale!"

In an instant, her petite figure transformed into a colossal rock, and Bahlaván laughed, saying, "But fret not, defeat holds its own grandeur."

Immediately, he assumed the form of Khvarenah.

"You are truly a 'beautiful' sword, and you need not be ashamed to bow before its magnificence."

"I shall not perish. After all, life itself is uncertain."

"My own flesh and blood shall face me. Nothing could bring me greater delight."

"I, too, wish to witness the remorseful expression on your face."

Kaikhosru, Mashyana, Sita, and an ever-changing tidal wave of countless faces emerged with dazzling speed. The onslaught of these myriad visages showed no signs of abating.

There was Ferdows, Alma, Samluch, and A-chan.

"I longed to be a hero. I desired to be a hero, a resplendent hero like him."

"Ah Magsarion how I yearn for you, accept my feelings of gratitude for your continued existence. Do not fret. I shall love you so intensely that it will verge on murderous intent. Therefore, I shall remain by your side."

"Now that both of us have met defeat, let us engage in a match later, shall we?"

"Hello sir! It seems as you look a bit different yeah?"

Yet, the captured essence of the fallen was fatally flawed. Magsarion realized that the core of their being, which he had assimilated through his unwavering understanding, had been distorted.

"The disparity is astounding. These individuals would never utter such words. It is as if their values have been distorted beyond recognition."

"Ah, discover the true nature of power."

"It seems there are realms your faltering body simply cannot reach, no matter how hard you strive."

"But why not relish in it? You have always yearned to encounter the true me."

*(Alright so this continuous bit of dialogue from Varhran is really confusing as he is constantly shifting with those of people that he used in order to understand them, and he constantly alternates between their dialogue and forms his own, which is such a headache to translate and correct but it does capture Varhran's essence perfectly. Props to Masada, his construction is nuts.)*

In essence, the man who birthed him had no comprehension of what he spoke. With synesthesia, he could connect and translate between 'Age of Zero' and them, but his understanding remained severely limited.

"I understand the habits of 'everyone,' perceiving the meaning and weight of their emotions. Yet, there is an undeniable chasm that separates us. I embrace their anger, sorrow, joy, love, and hatred without reservation, but our perspectives are separated by orders of magnitude. Even with those I have known the longest, we exist on different planes."

"Smile at him. It will bring him great joy."

"Indeed, it had often been said that when I smile, others grow stronger."

But for Nahid, who had traversed the cosmos and the script itself in search of a sincere smile of gratitude, to embellish it within this ravenous frenzy was an unfathomable blasphemy.

"I want to save each and every one of you. Everything you've ever done was in to complete me."

Sirius, whose love had been stolen and reignited, could not help but reflect on the memories and sacrifices he had made.

"Magsarion, my son..."

The woman's voice resonated with familiarity, and a sense of nostalgia filled the air. He sensed a fundamental difference in her, despite never having met her before.

"If only I could start anew, for I have no memory of conceiving you. Please, let me be a part of you once more," she pleaded.

"Shut up!" Magsarion exclaimed, as he swung his blade towards the priestess, only to be met with another sword of equal strength.

“No, this is too similar, but completely different. What is its essence? Oh. It is not the Divine Sword I possess, but rather the form of the Divine Sword from the woman's perspective.”

"You have grown into a remarkable individual, Magsarion. Now, it is time for you to offer everything you have to my hero," she declared.

A multitude of faces converged upon the Throne room, coalescing each segment of the space before them. It was a reenactment of all the lives that had ever lived or died.

There were no exceptions. From nameless individuals to trees and plants. Each person retained their original appearance, yet there was a profound disconnect, a chilling lack of understanding.

That is why ‘he’ sought out Magsarion.

"I have named them the 'Eternal Shine' - or **Aeon**," he explained.

The infinite faces condensed and merged into a single man, a hero adorned in silver and white armor, radiating a youthful exuberance.

"These are my comrades who can confront **Naraka**. As you can see, they bear my image, but their creation was flawed due to my own errors in awareness. I wish to give them a more proper form, so please understand," he implored.

The victor’s privilege to take whatever is in the loser’s position. For Varhran, Magsarion was a valuable piece to fill a void in his victory. His withdrawal from the stage had been orchestrated to ensure Magsarion followed the path of **Meifu Madou** and collected the necessary components for him to reclaim in the final stages of the universe. It was a cunning plan, nothing more nor less.

“I know you have a lot to say, but I'm asking you to hand it over. I won't make it any worse.”

“Brother.”

In contrast, Magsarion gently and quietly asked, with even a hint of calmness in his voice.

"Tell me one thing. Why are you doing this?"

"Huhhh? Do you still not understand?"

Varhran scoffed, responding with clarity: “I do it simply because I can.”

There was no inherent right or wrong in Varhran's motives, no grand ideals or sense of mission.

His desire for victory propelled him forward, driven only by the instinct to seize and conquer.

He was both adored and feared, capable of love yet willing to embrace eternal damnation if it meant achieving his goal. At the same time, Varhran also thought of 'everyone' and did what he could.

There was no distinction between his loved ones, whether they be his best friend, wife, son, or brother.

If it served his purpose of "winning," he would trample upon them without hesitation.

If he could perfectly replicate the **Aeons**, their brilliance would become eternal, blurring the line between the real and the imitation.

"Even if I sometimes feel sorrow in the process, it ultimately doesn't matter. It is the rule of 'this side' that the best, the most exceptional being takes charge. So it is only fitting that I should be the one to do it."

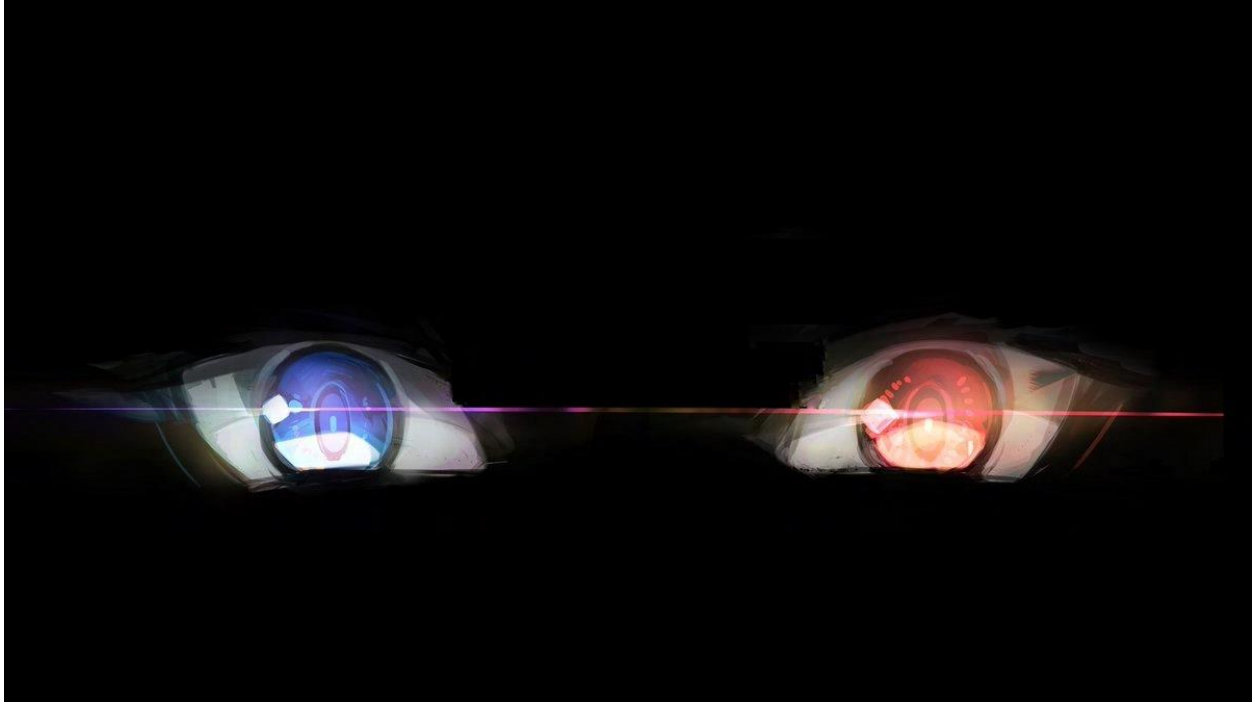
Magsarion nodded in understanding, his brief mutterings transforming him into a swift projectile.

"You are nothing but trash. Taste defeat!"

Magsarion exclaimed, launching himself towards Varhran, who met him with a bitter smile and his characteristic nonchalant demeanor.

"You say such dreadful things, yet I am not so different from you."

With Divine Swords of equal power in their hands, the fateful battle between the two brothers commenced, as the heterochromatic eyes of **Shinga** looked down upon their waltz.



### 3

Within the confines of our secluded sanctuary, we stood facing each other, our breaths mingling upon our shoulders, a testament to the countless clashes we had endured. The decision that lay ahead remained undecided, yet our unwavering resolve to fight had not faltered. Throughout our journey, we had shut out the outside world, immersing ourselves in the singular path we believed in.

We were but mere swords, seeking purpose and significance through the hands of our wielders.

And now, the true essence of our existence would come to fruition.

Both of us, fully aware of this reality, contemplated the hearts of our "heroes" and the collective prayers we had gathered.

"This may be the last time I directly address you. So let me ask you once more. Do you harbor any regrets?"

"Of course not," came Ahura Mazda's swift response.

She remained positioned outside the realm of my thoughts and emotions. Perhaps, to her, any sense of sorrow within this connection was regarded as a trivial weakness.

Unyielding audacity.

Proudly, I stood beside my antithesis, the part of me that cherishes... doubts and hesitations, in a way devoted to the man who epitomized such traits.

"Varhran is not of sound mind. He transcends the boundaries of madness itself. What can be salvaged by entrusting our future to such a man?"

"I have no desire to be understood by you. Regardless of your words, my decision stands unshaken."

Time seemed out of sync within our secluded refuge. With two Divine Swords coexist, the different become much severe. While mere hours had passed within our sanctuary, the outside world held years upon years of undisclosed time.

"So many years have elapsed that Magsarion has decimated the universe," Ahura Mazda revealed. Our battle, she claimed, had spanned that unfathomable length. We conversed for what seemed an eternity.

"If you intend to conclude our conversation, offer something more thoughtful. You're truly vexing, you know?" I remarked, exasperated.

Shaking her head in absurdity, Ahura Mazda pressed on.

"Varhran lacks propriety? Well, so what? I've known this truth about him from the beginning."

"But did you not view him as a deviant in that regard?"

"Indeed, you are correct, and that is precisely what I expected."

My counterpart remained perpetually unfathomable. She unabashedly extolled Varhran, even at the cost of condemning herself.

I found it pitiful beyond measure.

The acceptance of an insurmountable divide felt like a resignation, and despite being told it was too much, I couldn't help but pose the question repeatedly.

"He fails to understand us, just as no one can comprehend him. The **Aeon** serves as proof. To Varhran, 'everyone' signifies..."

I paused, taking a breath, before articulating my thoughts with clarity akin to a cloudless sky.

"They are mere characters in a story. He views the world as a form of entertainment, where smiles, blood, and tears are as inconsequential as the illustrations within a comic book. Although these emotions may stir him with joy, anger, or sadness, they hold no sway over his practical decisions. Our existence stands on an entirely different plane. When a beloved character perishes within the pages of a picture book, we experience sadness, but that does not entail erecting tombstones or conducting funerals in reality. By common logic, the majority of individuals prioritize self-preservation in such situations. Regardless of the emotions we invest, it remains a distant event occurring in some far-off corner of the world. The disconnect between Varhran and us closely resembles this sort of relationship."

"Heh, is that so?"

Ahura Mazda responded with a smirk.

"I shall do as I deem necessary. I can betray him while loving him, revel in his company while shedding tears. There exists no right or wrong in such actions. From our vantage point, it is a natural and admirable behavior. It is both ironic and amusing to witness the downfall of 'everyone,' who elevated heroes to legendary status, only to be perceived as mere characters by the very hero who shall forever regard them as insignificant insects."

"And would you consider the culmination of your efforts as the grand finale for yourself?"

"Well, I care not for such trivialities. What matters is his triumph," Ahura Mazda replied, her gaze fixated upon the heavens, her visage radiating a solemnity born of profound solitude.

"Admittedly, it may seem impulsive to introduce the **Aeon** at this juncture, when it ought to have been implemented seven generations after assuming the throne. However, throughout history, foot soldiers have always revered the swiftness of battle. Varhran's appearance was an unforeseen variable that caught both **Shinga** and **Naraka** off guard. They were ill-prepared for it. And since they were caught unawares, his irregular intervention has the potential to dethrone both mighty rulers."

"Do you believe that the **Aeon**'s lack of comprehension regarding 'everyone' stems from their transformation into a specialized weapon against **Naraka**?"

"I need not answer that. I was content to assume a different form elsewhere. What truly matters is that acquiring a new form is no simple feat, and I find myself at a loss as to what I should do," Ahura Mazda mused, her voice fragmented.

"It goes without saying. I just wanted to reincarnate as myself, so..."

"Even when it concerns the **Aeon**. Varhran, in his own way, ponders our existence. His endeavor to grasp Magsarion's ability to 'understand' and 'recreate' is testament to that. Naturally, there will always be a degree of discomfort in the structural aspect, and I suspect he is incapable of comprehending that. Yet, I derive satisfaction from the fact that the man I love exerts himself to save me."

"Are you suggesting that remaining an eternal servant is acceptable as long as love persists?"

"I do not deny it. Whether it be so, or otherwise, if it occurs within a story, I wish to exist within his legend."

All that mattered to her was that the man she revered transcended the dualistic realm in which she was victimized. If he bestowed upon her his affection, she considered it a blessing, regardless of how distorted and warped those feelings might be. It bore resemblance to the twisted love experienced by those who fell victim to Magsarion—the ones who believed they were saved as they were led to their demise.

And in that regard, Ahura Mazda concurred that Varhran, the epitome of perfection, should make the ultimate decision.

"Hence, Varhran is correct. Justice is victory."

As one who had challenged Ahura Mazda, seeking to refute her perspective, I found myself unable to argue extensively in favor of her case. Yet, it was precisely due to this realization that I believed the true grand finale would arrive once we were liberated from the cycle of mutual destruction.

From this standpoint, I struggled to believe that Varhran's path would ultimately lead to salvation. It appeared to me that it would merely result in a savage world where the strongest emerged victorious. It seemed wrong to conclude the story of the Divine Throne in such a form.



"If you have something to say, speak now. For this shall be the last time we converse directly."

I decided to express my sentiments to Ahura Mazda, who addressed me in the same manner I had addressed her before.

"Magsarion was born to kill, and he saved 'everyone' by choosing to exterminate them to the very last."

"A typical rule of this **Heaven**", Ahura Mazda remarked dismissively.

That's right.

Varhran transcends the mundane fools of this Law. It is a cycle of repetition. There is no end. The root cause remains unresolved.

"He does not relish combat. He simply lacks knowledge of an alternative approach, believing himself inadequate. This is why he gazes into their depths, comprehends them, and etches their immutable memories. In doing so, the countless prayers and souls may eventually be sublimated, liberated from the vengeance of this accursed universe."

This alone substantiates that he is not merely a killing machine - **Meifu Madou** may result in the annihilation of all life in the cosmos, but he carries out this task with unwavering sincerity, extending even to the smallest of creatures. It is distinct from the dominance of a mighty **Shinga**.

Those who believe they were saved by him should not view themselves as mere victims brought to their knees by force.

They harbored hopes of escaping the cycle.

Magsarion was recognized by all because he symbolized that miniscule possibility.

Magsarion is a man who has taken more lives than anyone, yet ironically, he has discovered a solution that transcends mere combat.

And for this reason...

"He appears to be a true savior (Saoshyant)."

"Do you truly see him as someone capable of embodying such an extravagant ideal?" Ahura Mazda inquired.

"Yes, for he is the one who shall reduce everything to **Nothingness** and bring this accursed Law to its knees."

Naturally, it will require time.

Even if there are realms he cannot reach, I am here to aid in such circumstances.

Thus, everyone shall be saved.

This was not a mere convenient wish. I possess a rough understanding of Magsarion's intentions.

It is a perilous path to tread, yet it aligns perfectly with his character— a man who consistently selects reckless yet effective courses of action.

"Varhran is but a vessel for consumption, not for development. He lacks a sense of ownership. Consequently, if we leave everything to him, he shall transform it all into a self-destructing bomb."

"So you propose that we eliminate these insects? Ultimately, isn't this choice based on power?"

"Forgive me if I may seem blunt, but it's time for you both to get your heads out your asses. Magsarion will teach you a sense of shame, and I hope that once you fools grasp his true nature, you will retreat to the farthest reaches of the cosmos."

“"Oh... you're out of line.”

Ahura Mazda's voice crackled with an undercurrent of seething anger as she muttered her response, her emotions palpable and resonating through the air like an ethereal canvas.

Although she dismissed my idea as impossible, I could sense a glimmer of intrigue flickering within her. It was as if she found some fascination in the notion, despite deeming it unlikely.

For in that revelation, there lied the potential for an end— an end that, while desecrating in nature, held the promise of hope and shared perspectives.

"You believe you can teach Varhran about shame, even when you struggled to do so with me? If such a feat were possible, I would willingly surrender myself to you, my counterpart. But how, pray tell, would you accomplish such a monumental task?"

A mischievous smile tugged at the corners of my lips as I confidently shook my head.

"I won't say. If I were to reveal my plan here, it would only lessen the surprise. Anticipate it, and I shall grant you a befitting demise. Do not forget your promise."

Ahura Mazda sharply pivoted, her gaze fixed forward, refusing to glance back at me.

"It is you who shall fall," she declared with a cutting tone. "No matter how skilled Magsarion becomes, he remains at his core an apoptosis. He is destined to eradicate you, until not even a trace of your existence lingers in the **Heaven!**"

“...”

Silence hung heavy in the air, pregnant with unspoken thoughts and emotions.

"Let us witness the outcome," she continued, her voice laced with a mix of determination and defiance.

"Yes, I am well aware," I replied, a faint smile playing upon my lips. "I shall miss our clashes."

With that, I turned on my heel, walking away with purpose and resolve.

Ahura Mazda mirrored my actions, both of us striding towards the men we had chosen as our masters.

The symphony of clashing swords reverberated in my ears, a testament to the furious rage concealed beneath the surface.

It sent shivers down my spine, a cruel dance of flesh and bone, a tempest of blood and wind. Yet, even in the midst of such brutality, I held unwavering faith in Magsarion.

I believed in him because he had saved ‘everyone’ born into this world, and I trusted that he would carve a path forward amidst the horizon of carnage, leading us towards a brighter future.



Sparks flew as the blades clashed and intertwined, a spectacle of immense power and might. It resonated like a rallying cry from the depths of the collective universe, yet the two men involved exhibited contrasting qualities.

Magsarion ravaged the battlefield, a violent monster wreaking havoc, while Varhran displayed an inexplicable finesse in parrying his every move. Their divergent personalities were mirrored in their distinct swordsmanship styles.

The disparity between them was an inevitable manifestation of their positions and emotions, a juxtaposition that left observers uncertain whether to lament or celebrate.

However, Varhran laughed, finding joy in the game he played. From a unique vantage point above the heavens, he savored every moment of the competition unfolding before his eyes.

"This is marvelous," he exclaimed. "Such a messy yet weighty sword. It embodies the prayers of all the people you've encountered along your own path, hohohh."

While he marveled at the words rolling off his tongue, there was no trace of distress on his face. In fact, Varhran stood unwavering, his Divine Sword resonating with the prayers of countless others.

He possessed not only the history of Magsarion's destruction of the **Shinga**'s universe, but also the thoughts and emotions that the younger man had consumed during his relentless rampage beyond the confines of **Avesta**. Varhran had materialized by stealing Zurvan's existence, who had been by Magsarion's side all along.

Moreover, until recently, there had been only one Divine Sword.

Ahura Mazda had experienced all the miracles Quinn had collected and shared that path with Varhran, so he too walked the exact path Magsarion had carved through his unbridled massacre.

Although their methods of assimilating information differed, Magsarion simply absorbed it, becoming one with the immutable present. Varhran, on the other hand, utilized his connection through the '**Age of Zero**' to instantaneously peer into the **Nothingness**, distorting and incorporating the components of Magsarion's path in his own whimsical way.

Thus, if the outcome of their clash were to be determined, the performance of the combatants must be considered. While various evaluation criteria existed, when it came to sheer skill, there was no debate: Varhran, unparalleled in his divinity, stood as the sole contender.

Varhran deftly deflected Magsarion's fierce thrust by skillfully scooping from beneath him.

Though the younger brother's raised hands left a gaping opening in his torso, Varhran, with his raised arms, could not attack simultaneously. However, he seamlessly combined offense and defense, executing a natural and unforeseen movement.

As their blades met, he released just the right amount of force, relinquishing his grip on his hilt. The result was a spinning mid-air acrobatics, as he used the trajectory of Magsarion's attack to turn the tide, kicking the sword back towards him, slashing his flank and ultimately disarming him.

Though narrowly avoiding being impaled, Magsarion, severely wounded on his side, fell to the ground with a resounding thud.

Just as Varhran had toyed with him using his unconventional tactics, this time he executed a classic technique, a textbook example of the deepest secrets of the art of swordsmanship. It was proof of his mastery of all effective techniques, be they orthodox or unorthodox.

But even then...

Varhran was never serious to begin with.

Because, at this moment, he was still analyzing Magsarion's **Commandments**.

With a hint of tenderness, he voiced that since he had initiated the attack, it should be permissible to seize the **Commandment** from him.

"You must maintain contact with the weapon, mustn't you? Ah, so such a **Commandment** exists."

No one had ever wrested a sword from Magsarion before, but it was evident that Varhran was an unparalleled master.

His behavior, as if imparting a lesson, is undeniably that of a father and son. It was tragically off considering the circumstances that led up to this point, but it could be described as an outpouring of affection.

"Come on," he beckoned. "We've barely started."

Nimbly, he removed the sword lodged in his thigh, and Magsarion lunged at him once more.

The composition of the Divine Sword had also changed, infused with the essence of Quinn and Ahura Mazda. The significance of its existence depended on the wielder, rendering the physical vessel meaningless. The maternal presence resided in the son's hands, and the spousal presence in the father's, solidifying their bond into a tangible reality.

Yet, it was undeniable that the battle remained under Varhran's control.

Every exchange of blows resulted in a sequence of superficial weapon exchanges. In other words, Magsarion's sword was repeatedly stolen, highlighting an obvious power disparity that bordered on the permanence.

The one deemed superior should have been bored by such a lopsided affair, and yet Varhran's eyes did not reflect boredom.

As time flowed on, an unknown tremor began to stir within his otherwise still heart. The father radiated jubilation, earnestly enjoying the clash with his son beyond the confines of **Shinga's** Law.

"I am overjoyed. In the past, you couldn't even scratch me, but now you're fully engaged in this performance with me. Oh, how happy I am, Magsarion!"

This genuine sentiment he shared revealed his true feelings to. From the depths of his heart, he welcomed this dialogue with his son, channeling even more of his strength.

"The pinky finger on your right hand."

In a matter of moments, Magsarion's right pinky finger was severed. Before he could even register surprise at witnessing a part of himself vanishing, another voice resounded with transcendent profundity, its omnidirectional force vibrating through his ear canal.

"Left ear."

Just as before, Varhran's chosen target on Magsarion's body was struck and lost.

"The middle finger of the left hand. Right thumb. Just above the left eyebrow. Slightly above the right corner of the mouth."

These were mere warning strikes. Varhran declared where he intended to strike, and the attacks unfolded as if they were destined, reversing causality and inflicting wounds that should never have appeared.

The absurdity of being unable to prevent the attacks despite knowing their arrival defied mere differences in skill, especially considering Magsarion's second **Commandment**.

Rather than completely predicting the opponent's move, it was more like enforcing a painted canvas. In essence, it was the power to attract the desired future, which is none other than the **Commandment** of Munsarat.

The man with hundred faces calls out one **Aeon**, embodying the Muderer Demon.

"I have warned you that he is not someone you can handle."

Munsarat, floating behind Varhran, wielded a massive saw in sync with his master. The dual strikes became even more precise, tearing through Magsarion's body from end to beginning, reducing his insides to an unrecognizable pulp, converting them into something beyond the bounds of **Shinga**.

"My master comprehends the past and thus determines the correct future. The fact that I confront you in this manner solidifies the success of my gamble. Naturally, victory has already been decided."

The **Aeon** of Munsarat smiled with amusement as he severed Magsarion's right ear. The murderer chanted, crimson splashing around him, twirling with evanescent grace.

"However, although victory serves as a reckoning for a wraith like yourself, I must pose a question. You have long forsaken flesh and blood, yet I fail to understand why you continue to bleed?"

"...If one's heart is shattered, it signifies that an immutable self is nothing but a false reality, a counterfeit riddled with the very thing it vowed to annihilate."

Despite his inability to defend against Varhran's announced attacks, Magsarion refused to accept defeat. However, his successive failures transformed into tangible damage, surpassing the boundaries of the concept itself.

Varhran's **Commandment**, the ability to take away something upon achieving victory, eroded the very core of Magsarion's existence.

"In other words, the moment I sense the truest feeling of defeat in you, you will assimilate everything that I am into you."

In that sense, this attack was remarkably effective. Magsarion's current state, drenched in blood and mangled, was clear evidence of this.

"Pierce his right eye, gouge it out from its socket. Tear through sinew and *telesh*, sever his nose from his face. Slice through the tendons in his legs, rendering him a helpless, quivering mass of agony, bound to the ground."

Varhran, true to his earlier warnings, carried out his macabre proclamation with a twisted sense of cheerfulness.

Standing before Magsarion, he raised his Divine Sword while Munsarat, his loyal servant, brandished a gruesome saw, embodying their master and servant bond.

The strike was executed with swift precision, a masterful display of lethal intent. With a caustic force, the blade cleaved through Magsarion's torso, splitting him in two.

The horrifying impact left no room for doubt— his body was severed at the waist, and only the upper half remained suspended in the air. The sickening spectacle of splattering blood and entrails bore witness to those that observed that a fatal blow that had befallen his form layered with **Nothingness**.

“So what about it?”

But Magsarion would not stop. Ignoring the agony coursing through his body, he transformed into a whirlwind of blood and smoke, launching a counterattack that defied reason.

Those familiar with Magsarion could have predicted his actions. Like his father before him, he possessed the ability to shape the future he desired. And so, with a sense of righteous satisfaction, his father reveled in the sheer joy of witnessing his beloved son in action. His soul echoed with exuberance, radiating wonder and delight.

"I did that long ago", his father proclaimed.

For a father, it was a blessing to see his child mirror his own strengths. Though a reasonable sentiment, revealing it at this juncture signaled the approaching climax of the battle.

Magsarion, however, could not imitate his brother's powers. Any attempt to fight back would break his own **Commandment**, while doing nothing would lead to his certain demise.

It was a deadlock that Munsarat relished, mocking Magsarion's futile longing for the unattainable.

"See, I told you so," Munsarat sneered, relaying Magsarion's perceived foolishness with scorn and ridicule.

Or at least, that's what the Murderer Demon believed, his face contorting into an indescribable expression in the next instant.

Magsarion's own sword, which had been aimed at him during his counterattack, suddenly changed direction, thrusting itself back at himself - a testament to the **Nothingness** within his being.



‘I feel no pain. My body does not spill blood.’

Thus, he extricated himself from the predicament, demonstrating that it was not a suicide attempt. Not only did his maimed torso regain its original form, but all the countless wounds he had suffered vanished. Moreover, the very tip of the blade that should have pierced his own chest found its mark in Munsarat’s back.

By physically defying causality, this phenomenon made sense when viewed from a higher perspective. Magsarion shattered the future Varhran sought to manifest and decimated the **Aeon** of Munsarat as his brother had known it. Thus, the wounds inflicted by the Murderer Demon's **Commandments** lost their meaning.

It was a highly conceptual assault, a testament to the strength of Magsarion's will or perhaps the power of his understanding.

"I see. I guess I never truly understood you after all."

Munsarat’s **Aeon** of his understanding was not as good as it could have been. Varhran, who honestly admitted it, with a mischievous glint in his eye, teased Magsarion, who stood up like a ghost.

Munsarat took perverse pleasure in inflicting perpetual suffering upon others, yet he sought more than a one-sided victory. He possessed a twisted desire to witness the propensity of his opponents' endurance. From his lofty existence, he was the kind of being who weighed the possibility of both father and son falling together.

Magsarion remembers that time, when Musarat first saw the wild courage of the black warrior and realized that he and his brother were nothing alike. While Magsarion comprehended the foreshadowing at the last moment, his father failed to grasp it correctly, leading to the father's usurpation of his self-proclaimed victory.

"Nevertheless, I have gained a grasp on it. Let us continue in this manner." Varhran cheerfully declared as his sword surged forth with fervor.

Though Magsarion's defense succeeded this time, his situation did not improve. For Varhran, the act of attracting the future held little importance. His true desire was to delve into the past, a goal he had already achieved. The remaining power was but a trivial byproduct, as insignificant as excrement or an insect.

"I am innately convinced that I will emerge victorious in the end. Thus, there is no need to entice you further, and I have no inclination to toy with the fabric of all existence."

In essence, their exchange was a game, a game that still persisted even if it were to be broken—an inconsequential matter from his perspective.

Meanwhile, Magsarion still bore wounds. Though the visible scars had vanished, the impact remained. The weight of countless failures exacted its toll. Magsarion's understanding faltered, while Varhran's grew sharper.

'The accuracy of the **Aeon** has increased, drawing closer to perfection and acquiring a more tangible presence. They are no longer mere puppets obedient to their master like Munsarat,' Magsarion realized.

Zariched and Taurvid materialized, embodying their conceptual forms.

Zariched spoke with admiration, "Oh, how I adore you. But I regret not having faced you at your full strength. Yet, that changes now."

A crimson-winged locust manifested behind Varhran to his right, wielding a colossal assault spear. He echoed Zariched's sentiments, ready to fulfill her words.

"I couldn't fight you under perfect conditions, and I deeply apologize for that," the blue-winged locust said, appearing in the left rear.

With a resounding roar, they unleashed a straight magic spear and a spiraling curved sword simultaneously. The precision and power displayed by the two entities rivaled their prime. Their techniques were masterful, and the madness within them mirrored their former selves.

"Tch."

Magsarion clicked his tongue as he was struck in the side by Zariched and in the shoulder by Taurvid. Though he had defeated them before, handling them at this level while contending with Varhran proved immensely challenging.

Merely employing brute force was futile; a different approach was required. And so...

"You are our dream!"

"You are our dream!"

Confronted with this onslaught, Magsarion chose not to engage physically. Instead, he wielded words to strike at the core of their being.

"Don't be so rude. Aren't you going to discipline your loyal hounds?"

"What do you mean?"

"What do you mean?"

The two winged locusts halted their assault, moving in perfect sync with Varhran, who rolled his eyes in response. Seizing the fleeting opportunity, Magsarion swiftly closed in, cutting them down. In return, Varhran approached his brother with a bewildered expression.

"Would you prefer it like this?" he asked.

In the next instant, Magsarion was sent hurtling backward by a colossal fist, the impact reverberating through his body. Varhran, the instigator, also received a similar blow, causing him to stumble back a few steps.

An entity materialized, standing in a realm that defied categorization, neither friend nor foe. It possessed impenetrable defenses and emerged unscathed, although its existence remained a mystery.

The intruder's identity was unmistakable, requiring no explanation.

He was a man dedicated solely to the pursuit of battle, fighting strong opponents without concern for his own position or circumstances. The struggle itself was his purpose.

"The game is eternal and immortal! Fight me!"

Bahlavan, filled with exhilaration, invoked the swarming phase. The power of the violent Demon King surged within him, driving him to ruthlessly unleash destruction upon everything in his path. Magsarion and Varhran were engulfed in the chaotic storm, yet the situation did not seem to be a complete failure just yet.

"If the real Bahlavan had been here, this is exactly what would have happened. The **Aeon**'s power of replication has increased once again. The remaining discrepancies I sensed in Zariched and Taurvid have been rectified, and they have manifested in a more accurate form," Magsarion remarked, analyzing the situation.

"W-well, it is rather peculiar that everyone is f-following the correct path now," Zariched commented, voicing her confusion.

After all the intense battles they went through, it's strange to see them like this.

The third-ranked Demon King calmly handled the relentless onslaught, while Varhran observed in astonishment.

"Thank you, Magsarion. Your solitary existence has become a collective surrounded by countless faces. Ahhhhh, for you all..."

Varhran's voice echoed with a mixture of appreciation and sorrow.

"Thank you for teaching him well."

"T-thank you for teaching him well."

Magsarion's choice had backfired. While proclaiming the difference between the real beings and the false Aeon reproductions was an effective strategy, it had inadvertently allowed Varhran to learn and adapt.

No matter how it turns out, the predicament remains the same, and when one is forced into a path where there is no correct answer, what awaits is, in other words, is the inevitable sense of foreboding defeat.

Varhran was not caught off guard by the barrage of attacks. He had handled the group phase of Bahlavan without difficulty, as if he had orchestrated it from the beginning. He could control and manipulate it at will.

"What's the matter? Did you lose?" Varhran taunted, swiftly obliterating the remnants of the **Aeon** Bahlavan around him before lunging toward Magsarion.

"The most important thing to remember is that you should strive to be the most efficient version of yourself," Varhran remarked calmly, evoking a sense of superiority.

The outcome seemed to be firmly within his grasp. However, Magsarion's sword, aimed directly at Varhran, was reflected back upon him and shattered into pieces by Mashyana's **Commandment**.

The damage of the Bahlavan's **Aeon**, who was further collateral damage of Varhran's simple attack, was passed on to another **Aeon**.

Samluch, strengthened by her wounds, unleashed a furious attack. The very same fighting spirit that burned like a phoenix was struck against the iron hammer, with a catastrophic red aura. The **Aeon**'s operational speed and efficiency was being updated at tremendous momentum, and its power was beginning to surpass that of the original consciousness.

If something is a perfect reproduction, it is only natural for them to also show growth. It is also nature's law that the quality of an army should increase with the caliber of its general. It seemed to embody such common logic amongst the twisted battlefield, riddled within the shimmering sea of blood.

The first thing that comes to mind is the fact that the original consciousness is now still in use.

"I'm....."

"What's the rush? You're a friend of my brother's, aren't you?"

The first thing that comes to her mind was the fact that the two of them had been in the same command together for a long time.

"If you're a friend of my brother, you should be able to do this without hesitation. He used to get in trouble with Sirius, and you're the one who wanted to fight him for that."

Samluch, her face contorting in disgust at being told what to do from this alien, this absurdity from another era, jumped away from Varhran's hand and struck at him. But she was unable to do so, as Varhran effortlessly nullified her efforts, as if she was tucked away into a toy box.

"I suppose this is what happens when the reproduction approaches the real thing. It would have been interesting if it were Bahlavan, but facing a normal one would be troublesome. Let's put a stop to this for now to avoid any unnecessary hassle. My apologies."

"You..."

"Don't worry, it's only temporary. The most important thing for me to remember is that you can't be a good friend to them otherwise they'll work with you if you know them well. There's nothing wrong with that, but I just wish to keep this battle for us."

"I'm not going to settle for that you filth."

Magsarion, who had raised himself with a bark, challenged him, but his legs were tangled in an unnatural way, and he fell over. Needless to say, that the identity of the anomaly, which was solely to be thought of as a wrench in the face of causality, was clear.

The last **Aeon**, Sita, emerged from the depths, her free will be temporarily suppressed. Tears streamed down her face. The battlefield resounded with the sounds of the wind cutting through the air like a mournful cry. It is no wonder, since she knows better than anyone, the misery and frustration of being treated like a puppet, only to move according to the universe's whims. She swings down the twin blades of her hands, ironically experiencing the same pain as before she was reborn because of the increased synchronization of the power of **Aeon**.

"The man who defeated me is now making a woman cry?!"

Even Kaikhosru joined the assault.

Magsarion managed to catch both attacks but replied in a low voice, "Watch and wait. I will act when I choose to."

"Well then bounce back then, little brother," Varhran said, applauding Magsarion's resolve.

Magsarion, a figure who required no instructions, received applause from the heroic monstrosity. The epitome of a twisted existence, a being that found amusement in sorrow. He was the first one to show off his testament to this familial reunion, leading the charge by unleashing one **Aeon** after another.

"I'm going to get you out of here."

Alma embraced Magsarion from behind, piercing her beloved's heart.

Ferdows unleashed the power of 'Tuesday.'

Ashozhushta propelled Magsarion high into the air, leaving him vulnerable to the concentrated barrage of demonic tools from the Star Cluster of Annihilation.

Khvarenah, the Workshop Master and Demonic Forge of Ancient Ruin, joined the fray.

However, Roxanne's **Aeon** distorted their perception, diverting the attack away from its intended target. Any chance of a counterattack seemed to have been severed.

Outnumbered or not, Magsarion was determined to kill until he had to kill death itself.

Yet, the **Aeons** remained fixated in Varhran's position. Unless he could break free from their grasp, a comeback seemed impossible.

"Hey, Sir Magsarion", Frederica's **Aeon** spoke with a melancholic tone, driving her scythe into the wounded man kneeling before her.

"I want you to win. That was my wish from the beginning." The remnants of the Frederica of reality illuminated the world with her speech of tender love.

"But if that happens, I will disappear too," the **Aeon**, interjected Varhran's perception, talked disdain.

"I'm glad I could meet you again, regardless of the form I took," Frederica's **Aeon** expressed her pride, relishing the one thing she could call her own at the end of time.

"Is it so wrong to wish not to disappear? Is it that much of an unforgivable prayer? Can't I think that way? I've been keeping this a secret from you..."

The sentence remained unfinished, hanging in the air.

"Don't utter a word."

Magsarion swiftly covered Frederica's mouth with his hand.

"You are not the one I know", he said, his tone firm. "You understand right, so shut up."

"Yes... sorry," Frederica's voice carried a mixture of resignation and a tinge of melancholy, bordering on solace.

"The man I fell in love with remains the same. However, the perception he holds of me differs from who I am now. This reality both delighted and saddened me, leading me to close my eyes and continue playing the role of a lady, even if it is a fabricated desire."

Behind her, a crushed expression slowly faded away, mirroring the pensive scene. The relentless assault of the **Aeons** came to a halt, and Varhran chuckled at the poignant moment that marked the end of the act.

"A slight discrepancy remains, doesn't it? They are truly elusive creatures to grasp. What are your thoughts, Nahid?"

"You're asking me? Me!"

Shrugging her shoulders in disgust, the Aeon of the Star Princess, looked up at her former fiancé.

"I don't know. I've already told you. I made it clear that I despise meddling in gentlemen's affairs, particularly when the disputes turn as ugly as this one."

"Reallyyyyy? Did you genuinely mean that?"

"Yes, I realized it later. So, what do you expect from me? If you want me to attack him, then I have no choice but to comply."

"No, thank you. The job is mostly done, so just take a moment to relax."

Nahid, who had been ordered to leave, nodded and turned on her heel after looking at Magsarion once in a flushed manner.

Now only two individuals remained— the elder brother and younger brother, father and son.

Varhran let out a heavy sigh, sitting himself in the center of the room, locking eyes with Magsarion.

"Shall we continue?" he calmly inquired, his tone tinged with compassion, as if he still refused to admit defeat.

"You've always loathed me, and I acknowledge that I've been a poor brother to you. I failed to act accordingly, and honestly, I never truly comprehended what I should have done. I'm still striving to find my way."

"....."

"What do you wish for me to do, so I may understand you, Magsarion?"

"Die."

Varhran once again chuckled at the simplicity of the response.

"If only I could perceive things as clearly as you do," he muttered to himself. "I've admitted that I'm a flawed brother. I will kill you, transform you into an Aeon, but if I cannot fully understand you, it will be in vain. You know that, Magsarion. The dead cannot be brought back to life. Without your presence, the brilliance of the **Pantheon** I shall construct will be fleeting, and without your immutable projection, it will merely be a feeble imitation."



These words may have seemed absurd coming from someone who had achieved a remarkable resurrection and commanded beings such as **Aeons**. Yet, there was a persuasive force emanating from them.

Varhran's concerns extended beyond merely defeating **Naraka**.

He sought perfection in the replicas he created, realizing that the deceased could never truly return to life. He required substitutes that would mirror the original without any disparity— a falsity so realistic that it in itself became its own reality.

Such a twisted yet resolute shortcut was only natural for a being who reveled in their supremacy over the heavens.

"You must be feeling defeat deep within your heart, and I must witness it to be content. If I were to eliminate all doubt by killing you, it would bring an end to everything, and I would feel sorrow, wouldn't I?"

"So, you want me to laugh."

"Yes, because that is the least likely thing you will ever do."

Thus, making Magsarion smile became Varhran's condition for victory.

"Let me see your smile. As long as I have that, I can surpass anyone. The wish I held dear as a child to make you laugh was never a false one," Varhran mused.

Varhran was right. Except that he only regarded the warmth of a smiling face, which everyone liked, as nothing more than a victory condition.

"I wish to make you laugh. I've devised a plan! But what should I do? I believed Sirius laughed at me when I defeated him, and I thought the boy in whom I had intertwined my factor(love) would be the same. However, you proved to be resilient and emotionless. Hey, stop being so cruel and help your brother!"

Such remorseless statements would have driven any other person into madness or shattered their heart.

"I don't understand why you fail to comprehend," Varhran voiced his frustration, facing an incomprehensible distance.

The disconnection was maddening, and yet the person in question believed they were acting right. Yet in the midst of this seemingly insurmountable disconnect...

"Kuku, kuku, kuku...."

Magsarion's shoulders trembled. He turned over and cleared his throat, surrendering to an undeniable fit of laughter.

Had he lost his sanity? No, not at all.

Did he admit defeat? Absolutely not. Never that.

Varhran realized that what unfolded before his eyes was neither of those. Because he did not feel as if he had won.

Instead, an indescribable sensation surged from the depths of his chest, eluding his understanding, and his bewilderment only grew more profound— a chilling premonition, a shiver coursing through his being like icy tendrils, an unfamiliarity that sent his fingertips into a numbing stillness.

"I understand, brother... “

“What do you mean...?”

Magsarion met Varhran's gaze with his swirling, malevolent eyes, wracked with **Nothingness**.

As he peered with those eyes, there was a profound transformation.

No longer did he witness the visage of a monstrous or heretical creature. The disassociated ramblings of a disconnected child, whose only possible companion for resonance was with a man consumed by countless others, had faded into oblivion.

Instead, what emanated from Magsarion's cold gaze in that singular moment, was the discernment of the depths of Varhran's vulnerability, concealed beneath layers of bravado and dominance.

It was the revelation of a man who, despite his grandeur and control, was plagued by an unrelenting apprehension— a fear of being left alone in the vast expanse of existence, an unspoken yearning for companionship, a desperate plea to be seen and acknowledged.

Behind those swirling eyes, Magsarion glimpsed a man who, despite his accomplishments, harbored an intrinsic emptiness, unable to form genuine connections and trapped within the

confines of his own isolation, an echo of the frailty that lurked beneath the facade of power, the fear of his tenuous connection to the world where he resided.

**Varhran yearned for his existence to be worth recognizing.**

A slash that rang true. Magsarion's comprehension traced a precise path, like a delicate spider's thread, that he had long sought.

And so, the divine **Shinga** observed them reflecting a subtle distortion within the vastness of her heterochromatic eyes.

#### 4

To grasp a complete understanding of the person he intended to eliminate, Magsarion sought to employ a special effect with his blade, enhancing its potency against the target. This tactical approach, now ingrained at the core of Magsarion's essence, transcended mere values to become a formidable power seamlessly integrated with his Second **Commandment**.

The second **Commandment**, which forbade basic human necessities such as eating, drinking, sleeping, blinking, defecating, and even thinking, in favor of embracing a relentless pursuit of death, possessed the extraordinary ability to discern the true nature of its target and exploit the slightest vulnerability within reach.

In addition to this, Magsarion imposed a further condition upon himself, one that required him to comprehend his opponent fully in order to achieve an unparalleled increase in power. This style had been in full swing since his battle with Bahlavan, but it was an understatement to say that the phenomenon was peculiar.

If new restrictions were to be introduced, it would be more prudent to establish this new vow as an independent **Commandment**. The inclusion of these unpredictable conditions should have been handled separately, as the decision to blend them with existing ones seemed ill-advised.

In fact, when Magsarion had a tough fight with Frederica, he had trouble adapting. Partly because she remained a mysterious presence of great intensity (her love for Magsarion seemed foreign to him). He ends up killed Frederica with a half-formed understanding of her immutability. The only reason he refrained from breaking his **Commandment** was due to ongoing improvements being

made, but the setback was still apparent. It was a matter of pure luck, at the mercy of the capricious grip of fate. Thus, the notion of breaking the second **Commandment** was nothing more than a joke, incapable of unsettling the fierce tenacity that defined Magsarion.

He would continue to sever, divide, wound, devour, and perpetuate his immutability until the end of time, consistently transcending his former self.

So, why did Magsarion make such a move?

It was not a miscalculation. He walked a dangerous tightrope for his own reasons. Although the details of this case are unknown, it can be argued.

He was a man who skillfully employed the threads of absurdity and lawlessness to his advantage, evident in the numerous powerful enemies he had slain. Perhaps it was a premeditated action, a moment when Saoshyant Mah, the self-serving **Commandment**, honed itself to the utmost limit within the realm of numerical expansion, roaring against the provenance of Varhran.

"Laughable, brother. You desired companionship."

As he kept talking, a swift horizontal flash lunged towards Varhran's neck. There was no need to expound upon the overwhelming power and precision of the lethal sword, now imbued with a conceptual understanding. Even if the truth, unbeknownst to him, were to be unveiled, the shock and dismay that swept through Varhran's mind would prove futile.

The relentless blade of Saoshyant Mah, perpetually ruthless, could exploit any opening. It possessed the power to create a fatal moment unconditionally, regardless of the opponent's mental state. Whether the person was a saint, a madman, or an anomaly, the revelation of their inner workings held significance for Magsarion. There, the raw vulnerability of their heart was laid bare.

A swift, deadly slash forcefully drove Varhran into the ground, marking the first time his exposed heart had been laid bare.

Or so it seemed.

"I don't quite grasp your meaning."

The counterattack, caught in a flash, was swiftly reversed and aimed at Magsarion's neck. While it did not cleave him in two, the blade made significant progress, causing copious amounts of blood to gush forth without severing completely. An opening had been exposed, undeniably so. However,

Varhran's exceptional skill promptly responded, striking the target in less than a moment. Compared to any previous adversary, Varhran outclassed them completely.

"Usefulness? Desiring companionship? What do you mean?"

"I speak of your loneliness."

Yet Magsarion refused to yield. Instead, his blood-red smile deepened, becoming even more ghastly than before.

"I have a good feeling about this. From this point forward, the battlefield is mine," he declared, disregarding injuries that could have claimed his life billions of times had he not comprehended and evolved along the path of **Meifu Madou**.

With sheer determination, he delivered a second blow, his aggression exceeding all bounds, yet still serving as a form of counterattack, exploiting the gaping breach he had created.

However, the counterattack ceased there.

Varhran promptly rectified his blind spot, as he had done before. Regardless of the gap that emerged, there was a time lag before the actual strike was executed. Thus, all Varhran had to do was navigate the situation during that interval. In theory, this form of imitation was feasible. And Varhran executed it with ease.

In this crucial moment, he swiftly turned the tables (even if he moved second), deflecting omnidirectional attacks flawlessly with astounding precision. Consequently, Magsarion's sword was once again deflected, inflicting further damage. This time, he was slashed in reverse, causing his body to waver dramatically.

"Ha-ha-ha-ha."

But Magsarion did not stop. He immediately recovers and challenges, and does not flinch at all, even if he bounces every time.

To the untrained eye, it may have appeared as an act of desperation, as if cursing the disparity in their abilities and surrendering to madness. He resembled a wild beast, cornered and resorting to nothing but frenzied chaos.

However, the truth was different.

Magsarion laughed as if he were genuinely convinced of his superiority. On the other hand, Varhran's expression began to cloud over, even if slightly.

What had occurred between the two of them?

After the tenth encounter, the answer became clear. As always, Varhran's blade had deeply pierced Magsarion's chest. Initially, Varhran sought complete victory over his little brother, making this outcome puzzling.

"?"

Exclaiming with delight, the younger brother's voice echoed throughout the boundless heavens.

"I cannot kill you yet, was it?"

The older brother emitted a low groan at the perspective of his younger sibling, who laughed while impaling him. At that moment, Varhran comprehended its significance.

He himself had declared that he could not kill Magsarion until the latter submitted. If this condition remained unfulfilled, and the battle ended in a dubious manner, the cycle of **Aeons** would be compromised, and the radiance of truth would be forever lost. Therefore, eliminating Magsarion at this stage would be an utter waste of time. Even so, his younger brother was still alive, all of Varhran's counterattacks were deadly swords. It wouldn't be strange if Magsarion had died ten times. Yet he persisted, and this is clearly not a normal situation.

In other words, it was proof that Saoshyant Mah functioned in such a form. In essence, due to Varhran's extraordinary abilities, the pitfalls that emerged were more devastating than the usual breaches.

"This is perhaps the first time I have lost control of myself. But do not despair."

Magsarion's blood-soaked mouth contorted, as if he were mocking himself. As a precursor in this world, he uttered a curse that resembled a blessing.

"Everyone is born immature and struggles against their weaknesses. This is the nature of reality."

Varhran distanced himself from the black flash of Magsarion's sword, which moved faster than the eye could perceive.

Simultaneously, he touched his face and observed what clung to his fingers.

“Revel in this moment, Father, for this is the true color that paints this accursed world. The vivid crimson of spilled blood stains the battlefield, a testament to the violence that courses through our veins. A sight both menacing and triumphant, a symphony of chaos and power that echoes through the very core of our existence. This blood, Father, it feels warm against my fingertips, as if it pulsates with a life force of its own. The sensation is intoxicating, a tantalizing dance of agony and ecstasy that fuels the fire within my soul. No longer do I observe from a distance, a passive spectator to the violence that unfolds. No, I have immersed myself fully in the symphony of destruction, and it is magnificent! And now... so have you.”





The color of blood— though this was not Varhran's first encounter with the sight, but until now, he had been looking at a distant landscape. The battlefields he had always immersed himself in, the victories he had accumulated, and the accolades he had received were all the work of others. He had lived his life with minimal awareness of his own involvement.

“Yet this blood feels warm.”

The shallow wound on his forehead, a mere gash, throbbed unbelievably, causing him pain that he could not bear.

Yet, it was not unpleasant.

"This is what you desired, isn't it?"

Magsarion approached as soon as he uttered those words, and Varhran swiftly intercepted him. Despite his thoughts being somewhat scattered, his countermove was remarkably smooth, astonishing all who witnessed it.

The blood-spattered younger brother laughed, despite his spurting wounds, and commended his brother's swordsmanship.

"You have an extraordinary talent. I envy you."

"Shut up!!."

Varhran's own words, spoken with more roughness than he had anticipated, surprised him more than anyone else.

"I was bewildered as to why you were getting so worked up, but I couldn't suppress the urge to continue fighting", Margsarion said.

"Do not talk with such cheapness."

"So you say have been trying? Even though I cannot recall witnessing your training", came the mock from Margsarion.

"..."

Magsarion's continuous assault with his sword was, without a doubt, terrifying. He was a genuine, self-made individual who had brought ruin to entire universes. His unique power had been cultivated along the path of **Meifu Madou**.

Meanwhile, Varhran's mastery, which skillfully handled every attack and executed magnificent counterattacks, defied description. There was an inherent unfairness in his skill, surpassing the boundaries of reality.

But did Varhran truly desire such talent?

"You can do that. You have done too much, and, on the contrary, it is a shame. What you keep stealing from your defeated opponents is..."

"Ah... so it seems I have been robbing the opponents I defeated."

His superiority eventually transformed into a source of embarrassment. He had been stealing victories from those he had overcome, driven by his longing to stand on equal footing with others.

Magsarion launched a ferocious attack, unafraid of the bloodshed it would cause. His strike found its mark once again, this time grazing Varhran's cheek, leaving a mere gash on his skin.

Despite its superficial nature, the deformed hero reacted as if he had been scorched by the flames of karma, instinctively recoiling.

"This is what I meant when I said you were lonely,"

Magsarion pressed on with his relentless assault, unraveling the truth about his brother.

Varhran was born with extraordinary talent and a heretical perspective on the **'Age of Zero'**. Just as Ahura Mazda had proclaimed, his existential hierarchy fundamentally diverged from that of the people in this **Heaven**.

To Varhran, the world must have appeared as nothing more than a story.

Undoubtedly, it was a transcendental position. However, that kind of relationship was broken from the moment of its inception, never to be actualized.

The smiles and tears before him were no different from the characters in a story. Just as readers remain distanced from the story's characters, Varhran couldn't draw close to 'everyone' he encountered, lived with, talked to, fought with... he was forsaken the moment he was born.

The result was an agonizing solitude—a yearning to be with 'everyone' and live among them that could never be fulfilled. The ability to dream the same dreams, to truly understand and be understood, to laugh along with them, to actually live was impossible.

And so, Varhran was burdened by shame over his talent. Only he possessed an unfair advantage, and so he established a Commandment to live a fair life, rather than one all-knowing, Godly, omniscient coward.

The privilege of a victor—to seize the most crucial weapon from his defeated foe. It could be their strength, their abilities, or even their emotions. But in truth, Varhran didn't do it to empower himself.

On the contrary, his intention was to subvert his own nature and become weak.

Even without plundering the essence of others, Varhran was inherently strong. If he desired a life of self-indulgence, so he could have pursued it without hindrance. Yet, it was not enough.

No matter what grand accomplishments he achieved or how much praise he garnered, it all remained within the confines of the story. Unless it intersected with his reality, it left him feeling empty.

“That's why I took everything away from ‘everyone’ else. I wanted to fall, to be qualified to weep and laugh with ‘everyone.’ So, I embellished myself with the attributes of ‘this side’ as much as possible, immersing myself within the lives of others. By doing this, I hoped to claim that I was one of ‘everyone,’ right? Right?!?!?!?”

"Seems like you attempted this and that, but in the end, you couldn't attain what you desired. My brother, you must have realized that your endeavors were misguided."

Magsarion remarked, a sarcastic smile playing on his lips, tinged with a hint of pity.

What can a brave man, who longed to be part of the story, a man who is too strong to be weak, unable to blend into the story he solely sought due to his transcendental existence do to find his place in the universe? There was only one recourse remaining.

"You discovered the **Age of Zero** and finally found your answer— If you couldn't descend to the level of the story, then you'll raise ‘everyone’ else up to your level. That's what the **Aeon** is for."

To summon and convert ‘everyone’ to his side, reincarnating them— Following the logic of a story, it is similar to bringing characters from a picture book into reality. This would dispel his loneliness and align with his belief that the greatest person should manipulate the strings. By

initiating the **Pantheon** plan, which opposes **Naraka**, Varhran would no longer have to be ashamed of his talent and attributes.

"Weren't you aware of it?"

"... No, I'm certain I was..."

Varhran responded. His voice, despite the fluidity of his slash, carried a tone akin to a blood-curdling lamentation, forever drowned in sorrow.

"I may have been lonely - that may be so. But that doesn't explain why I am different from the others. Khvarenah and the other **Hadou** candidates, who crave to shape and emanate the universe according to their own desires, are also lonely, if you can call it that. However, I don't perceive such feelings within them. Although their perspectives and abilities may differ to some extent, they all share the commonality of being distanced from the rest of the world. So, what sets me apart from them? Why am I so far removed from everyone else?"

"That's quite simple, isn't it?", Magsarion interjected, stepping forward into the fierce wind of their swords and meeting Varhran's gaze.

**"There was no need for your existence."**

Simultaneously, two sprays of blood erupted, marking Varhran's true wounds for the first time. Magsarion, clutching his chest, looked up at him.

Instead of launching another attack, he cupped his chin and directed his attention to **Shinga's** dazzling yet lifeless eyes.

"You said it yourself," Magsarion stated, "He is an irregularity— a being never meant to be born during this **Heaven**."

Replacing the Divine Throne through the Law of Transmigration is a reasonable process, which explains the emergence of **Hadou** candidates like Khvarenah. Even if they stumble along the way, they are destined to become the ones who decide the next God.

But what about Varhran?

In this **Heaven**, at this moment, is he truly necessary?

The answer is no.

At this stage, establishing the **Pantheon** holds no dramatic advantage against **Naraka**. And if they were to fail, it wouldn't inconvenience the existing system. Thus, Varhran is genuinely an outsider, a person whose name isn't listed in the cast. This alienation propelled Varhran to seek validation.

‘A reason for me being here.’

He yearned to grasp the inevitability of his existence through triumph, to plead for forgiveness and for life to declare, "You are valuable."

To whom?

The answer was obvious.

"That's why you created me."

‘My own son... born of my own flesh and blood...’

With Magsarion, Varhran sees the meaning of his creation on this plane. Varhran believed that seed of his ‘unnecessary self,’ conceived from his own flesh and blood, could comprehend ‘everyone,’ gather them, and soar wherever he pleased. It was a selfish and deeply unethical desire, but it was also an earnest prayer, one for a lonely man desperate for his own voice to be heard.

"I won't claim that you are a weakling searching for external proof of your existence, brother. You had to take the path you did, and by rejecting you, I have established 'myself,'" Magsarion spoke, his words filled with a mix of resolve and empathy.

"Therefore," Magsarion murmured, his sword held firmly at his side, "I will take care of you. I will save you, brother."

As always, Magsarion gazed directly into Varhran's eyes, as if scooping out the depths of his loneliness. He let out a furious ghostly aura, implying that this was the final blow.

Excitement coursed through Varhran's body as he realized that his son's ‘salvation’ equated to death.

Yet, he wasn't even surprised.

After all, it was Varhran himself who had cast Magsarion into the depths of **Meifu Madou**.

His son understood him, unearthing truths that no one else had ever noticed, and now he declared that he would care for Varhran.

‘As a father and older brother, it is my duty to accept this with joy. It may result in my demise, or I may be the one to end your life, but I cannot simply turn my back on you here. Whatever the future holds for me, I am certain that I will face it with unwavering conviction,’ Varhran resolved within himself.

"I knew I could convince you. Let the games begin," Varhran declared, his sword held steadfast at his hip.

Facing one another with symmetrical precision, a moment of tense silence hung in the air.

In the next instant, telames erupted.

A tempestuous gust of cutting wind, black as night, surged forward with terrifying momentum, while a white telash traced an elegant pattern. The collision of their swords unleashed a force of unprecedented density, capable of shattering the very Divine Throne of God.

Amidst this chaos, Varhran experienced a mysterious event— he heard a voice.

"I'm sorry. I am with yo—"

The figure of a woman expressing her apologies is seen superimposed on the creaking blade. No doubt the voice was emanating from there.

“Ahura Mazda—”

Varhran's Divine Sword cracked, and a rift materialized before his eyes.

Frustration welled up within him as he muttered to himself, "This is absurd."

But the relentless onslaught of destruction showed no signs of abating.

"You cannot lose!" he exclaimed, his realization dawning upon him. The impossibility of her defeat struck him, and he immediately sensed his own desperation.

Why was it that she could never be defeated?

Was it because the true essence of the Divine Sword resided within her?

Or was it because he believed that her fledgling counterpart's power could never surpass her own?

‘In the simplest terms... I believed in Ahura Mazda because she, and she alone - ’

Before he could complete his sentence, he was interrupted by her words, "You're the only one who recognized me."

In that moment, as the Hero's wife, Ahura Mazda, clashed with the Savior's mother, Quinn, the world shifted...

Indeed, it was Ahura Mazda who first discerned the mystery within the being called Varhran. It was she who saw through him and chose to stand by his side.

‘Perhaps we never truly understood each other.’

The notion of comprehending ‘everyone’ eluded him, and from Ahura Mazda's perspective, he remained infinitely distant.

Yet, none of that mattered.

She was the only one who loved him unconditionally, accepting him as he was. No matter how disfigured or alien he appeared, Ahura Mazda never rejected him. She forgave him, acknowledged him, bared her heart, and he wept tears of salvation and acceptance. Through her presence, he finally found his place and purpose in the world—the role of a husband, the mantle of a father, and the figure of an elder brother.

Varhran, who had no place in this era, found grounding when he encountered Ahura Mazda. Their relationship, as distorted as it was, was undeniably one of family.

The pivotal point lay here—it was delicate, fleeting, and ephemeral, but nonetheless... a bond had been formed on ‘this side.’

Magsarion's aim was to eradicate the ‘**Age of Zero**’ dwelling within Varhran.

At the moment of his impending demise Varhran, facing his wife, comprehended the significance of this truth.

"You tried to understand my true feelings and merge with me," he murmured.

They stood alone in the sanctuary, just as they did when they first met. Varhran shyly smiled as he called out to the weeping Ahura Mazda. Even in the face of disappointment, there was no trace of anger or resentment.

It was erroneous to label it as a betrayal; rather, it resulted from a more sincere, profound, and honest devotion to her husband. Ahura Mazda accepted Varhran with the belief that he, as an existence beyond the confines of this **Heaven**, would break her curse and whisk her away to a distant place.

Undoubtedly, it was a selfish affection, a self-centered adoration. Yet, one could not deny its existence.

He trusted her without comprehending the reasons, without even attempting to understand.

Like a God, he observed her not as a wife, but as a priestess, viewing her from his unique vantage point.

Upon realizing that Varhran sought understanding, Ahura Mazda's shame, which she should have relinquished, resurfaced. She feared becoming aware of her own inadequacies, worried that he would perceive her as a deficient wife.

"I told Quinn that if I recognized my shame, I would admit defeat, but none of that matters," she mused.

Rather than being a blind follower, Ahura Mazda chose to be a wife on equal footing with her husband. Understanding the intricacies within her heart, Varhran harbored no blame toward her. Gently, he reminded Ahura Mazda that if she was to be a wife, he should be a husband. However, she still struggled to reconcile her feelings of shame...

"I'm sorry. I can't ask for your forgiveness. I'm sorry for being such a fool and tarnishing your ideals," she expressed remorsefully.

"It's alright. I too started heading in that direction initially," Varhran reassured her.

"I couldn't fit myself into the story, so I tried to extract its essence. But Magsarion's hand forced me right back into the story. So this is such an end, even if deviates from my original plan, it's still salvation for me."

All Varhran had yearned for was to dispel his loneliness.

He dreamt of perceiving the same sights, experiencing the same sensations, and sharing laughter and tears at the same temperature as 'everyone else.'

And finally, at long last, that wish had come true.



"Well, it seems my time is running short, but I don't want to be extravagant."

Ahura Mazda, her Divine Sword having shattered, bore a deep wound upon her chest. The truth remained that she would soon succumb to her injuries, but Varhran was no different.

Saoshyant Asvatereta, Magsarion's **Commandment** to never follow Varhran's way of life. This outcome emerged as the genuine effect of his once ambiguous vows, now correctly aligned. By fully unraveling Varhran's identity, it transformed into a negating force, erasing the elements that defined him.

Having laid bare Varhran's true self, the surge of emotions synergized with Saoshyant Aushedar, which thrived on the intent to kill and the understanding that emerged through Saoshyant Mah. The three **Commandments** were released at maximum capacity.

This limited yet ultimate special ability eradicated the cosmic intervention of the '**Age of Zero**' that had resided within Varhran. Cut off from the other side, he is here because he was reborn on the verge of death, no longer the Commander of the **Pantheon**.

He no longer stood as an outsider with a heretical perspective.

As a man living in this world, he could embrace the troublesome and loving feelings that all husbands experience— as much as anyone else.

"I am grateful to you for affirming that you needed me and that I am indispensable in this era. Don't cry; it's embarrassing," Varhran expressed with gratitude.

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Ahura Mazda apologized repeatedly.

Varhran grappled with his emotions, but finally, he faced them from the same perspective as everything else. To him, everything appeared beautiful, and he realized that this was what it meant to be human.

Amidst his perplexity and ramblings, Varhran had found happiness.

The very fact that he was uncertain about what to do with it was a positive aspect. It was amusing how he found himself entangled in a quandary, wondering if he was perhaps treating things in a misguided manner due to his hastiness.

Both of these aspects bore testament to their consideration for one another. Even when their paths slightly diverged, there was no disconnection. Their exchange, made possible by residing in the same world and acknowledging each other's perspectives, remained equal, even if it occasionally resulted in irrational discrepancies. Varhran genuinely cherished the imperfections of their relationship.

‘A refreshing breeze courses through my heart as I realize that this was what I had been searching for. Though my furrow shaped eyebrows bear the mark of an eight, everything appears beautiful.’

"You desired to be like this with me, and you made an honest choice. You have no reason to apologize for succumbing to temptation. You have attained the future you yearned for. You've won."

When he added, "you won," the wife finally looked up and responded with a faint smile.

"You're such a sore loser," she teased.

"Hey, don't say that. You're too harsh," Varhran retorted.

The two lovers locked eyes with an alluring gaze before bursting into laughter simultaneously. They embraced each other tightly, whispering words of affection in each other's ears.



"Do you have any regrets now?"

"Yeah, maybe. I don't know... perhaps one if I were being greedy."

First and foremost, they had to comprehend the situation unfolding around them and within their lives.

'I wonder what's happening,' Varhran pondered, momentarily worried that he had once again acted insensitively. But he swiftly dismissed that thought.

Ahura Mazda's attention was fixated over Varhran's shoulder and behind him. She realized that she had witnessed something seemingly impossible and gasped.

"What's there?" Varhran tensed, feeling a surge of anticipation coursing through him. In response, there came a dismissive cough.

"Am I so insignificant that you're simply going to leave me out of this?" a voice resounded from behind Varhran.



'I feel a surprise akin to a shiver when I realized who was the owner of the voice behind my back. I don't know if it was before, but there is no way that I would have heard it wrong now. I turned around, feeling as if I had been played for a fool, but in reality, I was afraid to look back.....'

"Sirius..."

His "best friend" stood there, still youthful and unchanged, just as he had been when they were together.

Varhran couldn't help but ask, "Why are you here?"

The response came with a touch of defiance, "Do you expect me to leave without an invitation?"

"That's not why I'm asking..."

Bewilderment clouded Varhran's eyes.

"The power to summon **Aeons** should have been lost when my connection with the 'Age of Zero' was severed."

'Yet, this Sirius standing before me is undeniably real, and it leaves me bewildered, unable to hide my astonishment.'

"I don't care about logic. If you want to convince me by force, then consider it a miracle. I desired something from you, and it has come to fruition. That's all there is to it."

Puzzled, Varhran asked, "From me? What?"

However, in the next instant, Sirius swiftly interjected, stepping firmly into the space between them, too quick to react. The impact landed heavily on Varhran's cheek, resonating with a hollow thud. Ahura Mazda's voice pierced the air in a cry of disbelief.

"What are you doing?"

Varhran protested, trying to comprehend the reason behind the blow, his voice filled with indignation.

"You've wronged us in so many ways," Sirius retorted, his fists clenched tightly. "The most significant thing is that you can't simply replace what you've taken. Do you understand the harm you've caused?"

Despite feeling the impact on his face, Varhran remained perplexed about the reasons behind the blow, while Sirius vehemently voiced his protest.

"You've stolen my capacity for 'love,' and I suppose that's tolerable. It ultimately benefited Nahid to have her role stripped away. Even though it infuriates me that you made Quinn shed tears. But I can just about endure it."

Varhran responded with a hint of satisfaction, "Well, then, I suppose that's satisfactory."

"Well, that's satisfactory? You know how many people were involved because you faked your death?!"

His words, laden with a touch of sarcasm, betrayed the tumultuous emotions swirling within him. He knew all too well the extent of the consequences that had unfolded due to his fabricated demise...

“And what infuriates me most of all is...”

Varhran, still reeling from the strike, struggled to grasp the purpose behind it, and Sirius continued his outburst with righteous anger.

"Why didn't you ever consult with me? Why did you never seek my advice? You've been utterly useless to me!" Sirius exclaimed, his frustration boiling over.

“No, no wait. ....”

“I can't hear you!”

What is it?

Varhran was once again at a loss. In the meantime, he could offer an explanation. The reason he didn't use Sirius as his Aeon is simple. As the fight against Magsarion continued, his own understanding and reproduction was increasing, conversely, due to Sirius' characteristic the better reproduction of **Aeon** the less suitable for battle he becomes.

As for why he didn't talk with Sirius...

Varhran found himself at a loss once more, unable to offer an explanation. However, he managed to convey one simple reason for his silence.

"We existed in separate worlds, making communication impossible from the start. But more importantly..." Varhran's voice trailed off momentarily before he continued, "I thought you would despise me."

Ahura Mazda's surprise mirrored even Varhran's own, but Sirius, unphased, simply sniffed in a rather foolish manner and uttered an incomprehensible remark.

"Very well, hit me," he challenged, catching Varhran off guard with his casual invitation. "What?"

Varhran's confusion grew as Sirius beckoned him so casually, yet a surge of emotion welled up within him.

"It's my fault for failing to earn your trust. I should have told you that a few betrayals wouldn't change our bond and that I understand you," Sirius admitted, his voice tinged with remorse.

Varhran started to speak, "I'm..." but the exact reason behind their argument remained elusive, exacerbating his confusion.

"No, Sirius, it's my fault," Varhran interjected, shouldering the blame.

"No, it's not. If you have a problem with me, confront me directly."

"I've always found your pretentiousness... deeply disheartening," Varhran confessed.

"We're on the same page, I've always found your foolishness and self-centeredness distasteful."

Two men locked in a glaring contest, both claiming to dislike the other, yet beneath the surface, no bitterness or hatred lingered.

Varhran had once stolen Sirius' 'love,' which had now been passed on to Magsarion, and the determination to genuinely face each individual had become the foundation of **Meifu Madou**.

However, this outcome hadn't been part of the original plan.

It all started with Varhran's desire to be like 'everyone'.

He yearned to adorn himself with the attributes of 'this side' and blend in with the rest, as someone too detached from reality.

In essence, Sirius had been his initial mentor and an embodiment of his ideals. Admiration seemed an apt description for their relationship. Therefore, the emotions surging within Varhran at this moment were a gift from his dearest friend, something genuine.

Even if he had passed on that gift to his son, those sentiments had never waned, for they had always lain dormant, just waiting to gush out with the truth.

"Now I know how it feels, its color, and the scorching heat it emanates! I remember! I realize this is what I was born to do, what I am meant to accomplish. Damn it, I'm so embarrassed!"

Varhran cried, raising his fist in the air, and struck out his fist at him. Sirius, who was about to greet him, drowned his tears in laughter, and Ahura Mazda was crying as well. Now that he has a wife, a son, and a best friend, it was time for him to finally admit who he truly is.

And so, the curtain fell on the twilight of the final play. Through the script, the reader became one with the actors and celebrated his triumph as his long-lasting wish, and without a hint of abnormality and distortion, flourished into the skies of the never-ending paradise.

It was a gloriously ordinary ending for the man who had been so far from everyone else.

The ever-shifting eyes of **Shinga** gazed silently as she beheld the hero's final moments, as the Divine Sword struck him down. His life's end was met with solemnity and reverence, as if even the Gods themselves mourned his passing. In death, however, the hero found solace, released from the burdens of this world.

It is not known what he thought and experienced at the moment of his incredible death. Although it was predictable, it was impossible to see accurately even through the eyes of the divine.

**‘Thus, I can only objectively analyze the events that I have witnessed. I can only evaluate my feelings toward the outcomes. In essence, I was never truly invested. On the whole, I experienced distress at having to witness such a sanitized charade devoid of significance or worth. Yet, if I delve deep within, I am aware that true indifference is something entirely different, a simulated apathy toward that which I wish to suppress.’**

Varhran's fall was a correction of a distorted situation. As Magsarion proclaimed, there was no need for him, and by eliminating this irregularity, the situation improved. In this sense, it could even be viewed as a positive outcome.

**‘I regret that things did not transpire as I had hoped. I longed to depart this world with tranquility, a serenity I do not deserve. Alas, fate deigned it not.’**

**‘What I sense is frustration. The ‘feeling’ I had kept locked away for so long began to stir’,** and **Shinga** meditated deeply to suppress it.

She knew this was a perilous emotion of the mind, one that would lead to her downfall.

**‘Act as if nothing has occurred. It is sheer folly to dwell on a possibility that has already passed, as long as nothing has substantively changed. I am so accustomed to this kind of failure that it wearies me. Where is [REDACTED] when I need him most?’**

**"I am Shinga. Witnessing the beginning and reaching the end, I am both the mother and the enemy of all."**

The spectacles-adorned ethereal eyes mirrored both mercy and ruthlessness. They burned with exultant joy and froze with bitter sorrow, emanating vile justice and sublime evil. A grand mandala of swirling patterns materialized - the convergence and embodiment of divine authority.



**"Not enough, it is not sufficient, Magsarion. Now, come forth and show me your path!"**

This is the first battle for a successor in the world, a contest for the transmigration of the Divine Throne. The battle cry that will shape the destiny of future generations resounded amidst the utter destruction of **Meifu Madou**.

Magsarion remained unfazed. He was a man whose perception rivaled that of a God amidst countless bloodshed. He could foresee most things and had prepared parallel countermeasures, ensuring that he would never be caught off guard or fall behind. Thus, even in this moment, he stood there with a burning vengeful spirit.

Despite having defeated Varhran, he was neither careless nor conceited, calmly shifting his focus to the next stage. However, if asked whether everything would be fine, his response would be "No."

He believed the situation would surpass his expectations, and his heart raced with anticipation.

‘Despite the fact that I had prepared myself by thinking that the situation should exceed my expectations, it is undeniable that I was still not fully aware of the situation. It was less than a moment in time, just a few noises, but even so, an unawareness is unawareness.’

Consumed by self-loathing, Magsarion gripped his sword's hilt with all the hatred he could muster. He knew that repeating the same mistake would mean certain death. Nevertheless, he was prepared to confront the evil before him, even if it led to his demise.

**"Don't gaze at me so intently; it embarrasses me."**

A peculiar woman materialized before him, her attire unlike anything he had ever seen. It neither resembled a warrior's armor nor a noble's finery, but something entirely otherworldly.

she smiled at him, her lips curling in a seductive manner that unsettled him.

Most of her features were reminiscent of the previous Nadare, Sita. The split tassels of her hair and the mismatched irises of her eyes bore similarities to the original. The unique weapon, a pair of long swords conjoined at the hilt, also echoed the ones that she had bore.

Yet, they were entirely different.

Just as ants and lions both classify as living beings, they diverge in countless ways.

Beautiful.

Yes, she was undeniably a stunning woman. But compared to the ‘beauty’ of Khvarenah, there was an additional pressure that defined ‘Her’.



“Is it your true form?”

**"It doesn't matter. I'm uncertain if my unexpected appearance disappoints thou."**

She appears lovely like an innocent girl, humble like a gentle lady, yet there's a glimmer in her eyes, the essence of a poisonous woman. Contrary to her modest words, she exudes the sweet and ferocious aura of a tsunami engulfing all of creation. she embodies the cosmic laws, and the depth of her karma imposes an endless struggle on the world, beyond human comprehension.

That is **Shinga**.

There lies a difference between those who sit upon the Divine Throne of God and those who haven't reached that pinnacle, clinging to reality with only one hand. If a **Hadou** manifests its true nature when it governs a Law, then the presence or absence of accomplishments naturally relates to spirituality.

**"No need to be so proud before me. Thou hast already left your mark. I'm merely the one who set all of this into motion. A treasure hunt or a race? I simply happened to strike gold in that kind of competition."**

As if fully attuned to his thoughts, or rather, having perceived them in their entirety, **Shinga** smiled and added:

**"The proof lies in the fact that I haven't mastered martial arts of such caliber, yet I stand before thou, reigning supreme as I always have."**

"I'm sure you haven't."

With a single swift stroke, he cleaved her form into two. Magsarion's lethal blade severed both sides of **Shinga** in an exaggerated slash.

‘The sensation is undeniable. This blood spatter is no illusion.’

He had undeniably struck down the enemy, and her remains lay at his feet. But naturally, it was not the end.

**"Oh, this is astounding. I haven't encountered such a ludicrous discrepancy in strength since my battle with Sakra. When 'mortality' still coursed through my veins, he almost killed me countless times."**

Voices began multiplying, resounding from right to left, front to back, and even from the sky. Gradually, the chanting took shape, and the shadows gained substance. Countless **Shingas**, numbering in the hundreds of millions, trillions, and even beyond, sang gleefully.

**"Naturally, these words should not be taken literally, after all in the 'Age of Zero,' death did not exist, and the concept of Law was nonexistent. Hence, I yearned for a world of stark contrasts - where victory and defeat were clearly defined, devoid of ambiguity, enshrined within black and white for all eternity."**

The girls encircling Magsarion moved with ethereal grace, their sizes varying greatly. Some were human-sized, like **Shinga**'s, while other **Shingas** were diminutive, no larger than the tip of a nail. Astonishingly, there were even **Shingas** larger than Khvarena. Together, they chanted in unison, Their voices carrying an otherworldly weight.

**"I wonder what kind of power we shall obtain once we have mastered the art of killing one another?"**

In response, a destructive sword dance commenced. A tempest of darkness surged forth, intercepting the accelerating **Shinga**'s converging on them all.

Individually, each **Shinga** seemed inconsequential. Magsarion was not outmatched by any means, swiftly dispersing hundreds of **Shinga** with each swing of his blade while increasing his rotational speed.

'However, this quantity is undeniably abnormal. No matter how many I kill, I do not feel like I am truly killing them. In fact, I catch glimpses of them regenerating at the edges of my vision as I cleave through their ranks...'

**"As long as I exist, 'everyone' shall arise. If thou sole desire is to kill, then unleash and rampage to thyn heart's content."**

The number of appearing **Shinga** corresponded to the lives Magsarion had taken thus far. So if they continued to emerge infinitely, overwhelming 'Them' with sheer force would prove impossible.

Truly, this was the work of a deity.

From the cosmic scale down to the sub-atomic-level, the multitude of **Shinga** represented a Goddess-like existence in their entirety. Slowly and delicately, her palms met, merging faster than the speed of light.

**"I am the world. Love and madness coexist within me."**

Caught within her grasp, Magsarion must have experienced an indescribable shock, caught within the clasp of her prayer.

A violence he had never before encountered was a transcendental destruction only achievable by a God.

Yet, his own power was immense enough to crush it in the following moment.

The palms of the colossal God ruptured, amid a hellish vortex of gravitational waves and radiation, revealing a ferocious, jet-black knight.

**"Brilliant, but hardly surprising."**

This exchange of attacks and defenses demonstrated Magsarion's ability to withstand the divine power of **Shinga**.

However, that did not guarantee victory.

Both sides lacked the decisive factor that could tip the scales in their favor. The shattered **Shingas** swiftly regenerated, returning the situation to its initial state. No assessment of the outcome was necessary to discern which side held the advantage.

Destroying 'everyone' took Magsarion an extensive amount of time. As long as that fact remained the foundation of the clashes, it would require an equivalent duration to eliminate all the incarnations of 'Shinga.'

Magsarion's **Meifu Madou** was tailored to this particular type of combat, making it structurally impossible for him to pursue any other approach. Deviating from this path would result in the collapse of his convictions, tantamount to self-destruction.

Consequently, he had no choice but to engage in battle within his opponent's domain, knowing that even if he were to vanquish her, she would resurrect once more. The end was nowhere in sight, and in a protracted conflict, Magsarion found himself at a disadvantage.

**"Thou must not worry, even if it takes tens of hundreds or thousands or millions of years. Even while I joust with a child like thou for eternity, as long as my pitiful Law reigns supreme, new Hadou qualifiers will continue to emerge. Let us see how long thou can endure."**

As long as **Shinga** continued to produce 'everyone,' figures like Khvarenah and Kaikhosru would be born one after another. Thus, the longer Magsarion fought against her, the more opportunities arose for another opponent to bring about his downfall.

While it may not be an immediate concern, there would come a time when he would reach his limits. Magsarion had already surpassed the realm of mere physical strength, but when confronted by an adversary of similar caliber, the bar was raised once again.

**"Tis not a matter of individual strength, but rather that of vessel and it's disposition. It hinges on one's ability to bear the weight of the world, the direction of depicted ideal, and the breadth of the field of view to keep looking at it. Thus only Hadou Gods can oppose one another."**

Magsarion did not possess the attributes of **Hadou**.

Therefore, **Shinga** asserted, **"Thou are not enough."**

Perhaps **Shinga** intended to continue fighting and eventually yield the Divine Throne to the most formidable among the newly born **Hadou** Candidates. To her, Magsarion was a mere nuisance, a pebble in the road. It seemed only natural to dismiss him with a casual flick.

To this, Magsarion could only chuckle.

"You seem to think it is folly to challenge your strategies. You find it unnecessary to retaliate against the divine might of the **Hadou**. However you..."

"Have never been successful."

His words were sharp and confident, trouncing mere intuition. Magsarion had already gathered enough evidence to discern the essence of **Shinga**.

"I can perceive your essence through Nadare's failures and her inherent attributes, after all, she is your **Sensory**. All your plans have consistently backfired, never coming to fruition."

**Shinga** did not deny it. In fact, with the emergence of the paradoxically irregular Varhran, it became clear that planning was an alien concept to her.

"Why do you pride yourself on speaking of the future? Your naivety is laughable you fool."

Magsarion sneered, a mocking tone permeating the Throne room as the understanding settled in.

Countless **Shinga** nodded in agreement, following a brief pause.

**"I must confess that indeed my life has been a litany of failures. I am acutely aware, without needing external validation, that this is a plight shared by the vast majority of humanity."**

**Might I inquire, dost thou grasp the implications of such circumstances? Is it a wise strategy to assume that everything will inevitably go awry? Indeed, to me, the unexpected twists and turns of fate are precisely what I have foreseen and planned for. In a sense, I have brought each of my prophecies to fruition. So why does my heart ache?"**

"Trash like you always gravitate toward the notion that everything goes wrong from the beginning."

To **Shinga**, failures were ever-present. Yet, if she possessed the willpower and resilience to confront them head-on, success and failure became indistinguishable. No matter the mistakes she made, as long as she took them in stride and faced them with a spirit of enjoyment, 'Her' plans would inevitably come to fruition under 'Her' Law.

**"There is no cause for concern. If thou hast now awakened to Hadou and defeat me through means I never deigned possible, then so be it. I am confident that thou would be pleased to hear that... The grand scheme of the archetype remains unchanged; thus I shall graciously accept it."**

The nonchalant tone of her voice revealed her sincerity. It was not a bluff or a deception but as she said it would be.

As Sita had described, merely killing **Shinga** was not enough to claim victory. As the creator of the system governing the transmigrating of the Gods, she remained within the boundaries of her Law, regardless of how miserable the outcome. The smile of the Goddess would remain unfrozen.

However, Magsarion's fearless demeanor remained unshaken. His malevolent eyes, which had pierced and dismantled every opponent before him, now blazed with fury as he proclaimed with solemnity.

"My brother became that way due to his connection with the **Age of Zero**, ingrained in him from birth. As I was born into your world, I too am bound by your Law at my core. Therefore, I shall shatter your grasp and break free from your clutches. I shall unleash upon you a wrath unlike anything you have ever witnessed and not rest until I have crushed you beneath my heel."

His words, resonating with the authority of one who recognized his own greatness amidst mere mortals, echoed like the clarion call of an ancient deity - high, majestic, and ferocious, declaring his transcendence to all who would listen.

"I shall now ascend beyond my three **Commandments**. Consider this, for the sake of clarity, my fourth **Commandment**."

His words flowed with a serene certainty, emanating from one who recognized his liberation from the confines of mortal laws. They resounded like the decrees of a wrathful deity.

‘With a conventional blade, I am powerless against the source,’ the formidable warrior contemplated.

That was the very realization that led him to believe he had unraveled the enigma of slaying a God.



Magsarion, the wielder of the Divine Sword, commenced his reincarnation.

However, this did not imply an abandonment of his former self. If his true essence was to be overthrown in every sense, then adhering to the Commandments set forth by **Shinga** would be contradictory. Yet, those three **Commandments** constituted the very core of Magsarion's being, the foundation upon which his life was constructed. He refused to forsake them, for doing so would mean forsaking himself.

*(It is implied for Quinn to be the one speaking after the description of Magsarion's Commandments.)*

**Forbidding physical contact between myself and others with the exception of those involving killing intent**— once I thought it a foolish and sad imitation, yet now I understand that for this child, it is also linked to love. Such a bittersweet realization that to protect those dear to us, we must sever the ties of affection. But still, we hold on to the hope that one day, the darkness will be banished, and love will once again flourish. Until then, we must bear the weight of this sorrow, and carry on, persevering under this God-forsaken Law.

**The prohibition of unnecessary physiological phenomena other than in battle** - a steadfast wind of obstinacy that rushes forward in its fervor, refusing to waver, even for an instant. In



exchange for showing no mercy, Magsarion diligently endeavored to comprehend his opponents on a profound level. By touching his chilling blade, he could discern the true worth of anything.

**And a rebellious heart, directed towards his mysterious father, a figure unknown and unknowable, and to deny him in his entirety** - a power capable of saving a soul that could only be deemed as anomalous in this world. Undoubtedly, it was a marvelous existence. Like a fragrant flower, it brought a touch of beauty and grace to a world often harsh and unforgiving. It served as a beacon of hope amidst darkness and turmoil, reminding even the most lost and forsaken souls that they, too, could find their way home.

Each element, no matter how unsettling his blood-stained sword might be, held profound importance. They were indispensable components that defined his very essence. Though inconvenient at times, they could not be treated as mere garments of everyday life.

These words were spoken with a sharp, impassioned tone, as if the speaker sought to convince the listener of the undeniable truth. The voice resonated with determination and conviction, firmly believing in the righteousness of the cause.

Hence, Magsarion did not discard these **Commandments** but rather sought to improve upon them.

It was a means of inheriting outdated attire in a more refined form within a new world. In essence, evolution and growth encapsulated the future of Magsarion. Like a magnificent flower blossoming in spring, his resolve and strength would continue to flourish, breathing new life and hope into the surrounding world.

‘At first, I believed the quickest path was to transcend **Collapse**. Yet, once I realized that violating the **Commandments** was the prerequisite, it was out of the question. I am who I am, and I shall never change.’

He now sung an immutable prayer, deeply resonating within his ascendance.

"I do not seek your permission. I shall sharpen my blade and wield it solely for myself."

These words were uttered with a cold, murderous tone, as if the speaker was already envisioning the blood to be spilled.

All **Commandments** necessitated an oath and the approval of **Shinga**. However, Magsarion had no intention of seeking such validation. Instead, he aimed to be reborn by his own volition, free from his reliance on God.

Through this act, he would create an escape from this accursed Law, an opportunity for a fresh start. Unbound by the rules and constraints of past Laws, he would carve out his own path, shaping a future for himself.

For convenience, he designated this fourth **Commandment** as **Saoshoyant Taurwari - Remaking his existing Commandments, and not using them as he had until now**, it bestowed upon Magsarion a boon, **becoming an existence that exceeds Shinga's predictions**.

It was a lawless prayer, one that disregarded the edicts of God. Of course, it was no simple task, but it was not beyond his reach.

Because part of his rebirth had already taken place.

**"I see. Indeed, it does make sense when framed in that manner. I must confess that I recall nothing about bestowing upon thou the ability of 'understanding.' 'Tis a perplexing matter that requires further consideration before reaching any conclusions."** she nodded in agreement, appearing to have resolved one of her queries. After comprehending Varhran, an existence beyond the realm of this Law of understanding, there was no doubt that some form of evolution had been achieved.

**"Without altering the appearance of a Commandment, dost thou wish to reshape the existing weapons, wherein my law resides? Surely, that would be a concept beyond my grasp. Nonetheless, it is an 'improvement',** and thus, logically she expressed with an impressed tone, leaving room for further inquiry.

**"What comes next? What then, shall thou do with the heinous fixation on killing? Narrowing down the conditions of contact to a singular aspect has endowed thou wicked sword with unmatched sharpness. Introducing more conditions would only degrade its edge."**

"I know the details. I have already bestowed the answer upon you," Magsarion responded.

His clash against Bahlavan likely triggered this revelation. By surpassing the swarm of locusts and confronting the countless **Shinga** that populated the Divine Throne, the Horizon of Slaughter reached even greater heights.

Exhibiting the pinnacle of **Hadou**, Magsarion established the evolutionary direction of Saoshoyant Aushedar.

"...My people, those who shall make contact with my murderous intent, shall be born infinitely."

Until now, his vow had remained mere words. Nothing notable happened. However, this was a clear opportunity. For in referring to them as "my people," he pledged himself to become a **Hadou** God. At the very least, he had taken the initial step towards achieving it.

The 'murderous intent', as described by **Shinga**, originally lacked a purpose. Should he exterminate everyone and stand alone, the foundation of his existence would lose its meaning, rendering it all an illusion. Far from remaining immutable.

**"Therefore, thou art implying that thou shall never cease to kill?"**

To focus solely on the end until the opponent was vanquished, until the end of time, to possess the power to act as desired until then. People would wither away into nothingness on their own, be born of flesh on their own, and unquestionably unleash their rage on their own.

It was a system that leaned towards leaving individuals to their own devices. Unlike **Avesta**, it did not enforce a specific directive, but neither saves nor guides those who have lost their way.

This Divine Throne system controlled people in a manner that allowed them to charge forth in whichever direction they chose.

Of course, if Magsarion assumed control, his potent killing intent would emanate as a new Law. Yet, in this case, it made no difference whether God was present or absent.

People would live, die, and fight on their own.

The inescapable truth dictated that each individual had to confront their mortality and forge their own path in life. To some, this may appear cold and heartless, but to others, it was a necessary rule for survival. Those who followed in Magsarion's footsteps understood this and endeavored to live true to themselves, free from external interference. Though some may label him an evil God, his rule was undeniably a natural and inevitable part of the world they would come to inhabit.

**"As I suspected, thou are ill-suited for the task."**

The evidence was sufficient to give even **Shinga** dismay. she set aside her own tyranny to denounce Magsarion's lack of responsibility.

**"The path of the Hadou is one of governance and rule, and it is impossible to embark upon it without an ideal, regardless of its rightness or wrongness. The duty of the Hadou is to show others the way, yet thou prayers remain self-serving, solely for thou own benefit, lacking substance. They amount to nothing more than idle musings."**

"I understand. I, too, have no desire to sit upon the seven troublesome thrones."

Magsarion's proclamation of ascending to godhood elicited surprise and disbelief from the divine deity known as 'Shinga.'

For the first time, the all-knowing deity exhibited visible signs of displeasure toward the lawless and unreliable conduct of this mortal.

This paradox, claiming godhood while rejecting the associated responsibilities, stood as an anomaly that could not be overlooked.

Nevertheless, Magsarion remained resolute in his refusal to succumb to the divine will. He would forge his own path, even if it meant defying the laws of logic and reason.

*(Note: notice the different between bold word **I** for Quinn / the exterior Muzan and normal word I for Magsarion himself)*

"It is **I** who shall ascend the throne, not I, but as the embodiment of my indomitable will. Die trembling in fear, for if you dare to challenge me, **I** shall inflict upon you a devastating setback."

With the **I** held before his eyes, Magsarion revealed his ultimate weapon: evolution.

In that decisive moment, **I** too understood the gravity of the situation. Our souls intertwined, merging into one, as **I** locked gazes with my son's reflection in the gleaming blade of the sword.

Every prayer **I** had ever collected, every cherished memory of 'everyone' that **I** and Magsarion held dear, surged within *me*.

The powers of **Meifu Madou** began to envelop Magsarion, emanating from the Divine Sword in a dazzling display of radiance and effulgence.



**“This...”**

A sense of impending doom washed over **Shinga**, sending shivers down her spine. she felt a fear she had never known before, realizing that whatever was unfolding was far from favorable. Though her mind was clouded with confusion, the thought of immediate destruction crossed her, yet she hesitated.

**I**, bound by duty, resolved to shield and safeguard 'my' son from the line of fire until this **Heaven** reached its end. **I** possessed no luxury of action, but **I** channeled my thoughts into resolute words, steadfastly blocking the machinations of **Shinga**.

With each word spoken, **I** infused my rebellious spirit, fueled by the grand vision **I** had always dreamed of.

"Your **Commandment** is '**the prohibition of anger**', is it not?"

"You embody the concept of all evanescent dualities within these dimensions, yet the color of anger seems to be absent. Is it truly missing, or are you merely suppressing it? I am intrigued to know the truth."

Even the Throne God herself abides by **Commandments**. As the one who established the Law of this **Heaven**, she is bound to them more steadfastly than any mortal. And **I** would venture that her adherence to these **Commandments** no less as weighty as the entire universe itself.

"You, in truth, are indeed a deeply angry individual. I dare say you have made countless mistakes in the past due to your uncontrollable rage."

**Shinga** looked at me with a despondent expression. The usual blend of disdain and admiration seemed to waver, as if she was no longer able to harbor both sentiments simultaneously. (*Shinga is starting to lose control of her Law, not by self-destruction, but because Magsarion's Muzan is starting to emanate unconsciously.*)

**"In my time, I have witnessed much. I have beheld wonders and horrors alike. Oh, it's true, but what about it? Art thou trying to provoke me into breaking my own Law and destroying myself? I think not. I am not so easily swayed by such petty provocations."**

"No, I am not thinking such convenient thoughts."

If one could wreak havoc upon a Gods reign with something as simple as provoking God to ‘Her’ demise, then no one would ever feel a challenge. However, if the vastness of her consciousness must dedicate to suppressing her rage, leaving no time for her to act, it would not hinder Magsarion's evolution.

It falls upon *me*, the divine harbor of miracles, to seize every opportunity from **Shinga** until the end of time. This is even more so since Magsarion is currently in a state of pure **Nothingness**, in order to constitute his trump card.

This responsibility, with its immense gravity, weighs heavily.

"Moreover, your essence has been reflected in us in an inverted manner. Because you exist as the highest and root of all existence, you must ‘**Not harbor the emotion of wrath**’, so you have inadvertently ‘**Given birth to a world in which individuals get stronger the more fiercely wrathful they are.**’ There are exceptions, of course, but generally speaking, isn't it so? At the very least, strength and willpower serve as the key to transcending both limitations and **Commandments**. And it is not physical strength alone that you train your puppets in to combat **Naraka**, is it?"

"**Thou art absolutely correct, my dear. I believe the complexities of the human heart are the most precious of all things. It is a marvelously intricate and beautiful organ capable of immense love and devastating pain. And having experienced both, I am truly grateful, for it has shaped me into the person I am today.**"

Her smile radiated warmth and affection.

"**I consider myself blessed to have encountered a remarkable being such as thou.**"

"But you were unable to defeat **Naraka**, were you?"

"**Oh? Pray tell to enlighten me as to how thou hast arrived at this particular stance?**"

**Shinga** replied, her brow furrowed with pressure.

Although terror coursed through me, *I* feigned composure, and it seemed to have succeeded. Emboldened by newfound courage, *I* pressed on.

"It is a simple deduction. Why would you deny yourself the emotion of anger when you value spiritual strength and emotional richness over mere power and fighting prowess? It is not merely

a matter of you losing composure, as you have undoubtedly failed in the past due to your own rage... No, it runs deeper than that. It is the fact that the **Age of Zero** is incapable of comprehending emotions."

As removed from human understanding as Varhran was, the original **Zeroth Heaven** may have been even more devastating.

"Perpetuated through the **Age of Zero**, emotion itself is an enigma, as a force that devours the heart and transmutes it into something unfamiliar. It matters not what the truth may be, for against beings that possess emotions, **Naraka** stands as an insurmountable adversary. Was this the reason behind your concerns about the power of prayer? Were you so incensed that you couldn't abide the existence of **Naraka**, that heinous entity rendering the 'heart' obsolete?"

Silence lingered in the air.

"The heart is imperfect, transient, precious, and thus, beautiful. You sacrificed everything, even your own livelihood, to prove its worth. You forsook the most vital emotion of your entire existence, instead giving rise to an army of anger instead. Through the **Aeon**, you seek to stab **Naraka** in the back and strike back."

"I am not inclined to enter into a debate on this matter. Each of us holds our own ideals, beliefs, and aspirations. While I am unaware of past events, the unending hellish torture that you must have lived through, I cannot permit you to act without restraint. As Magsarion has voiced, failure to heed his words will result in your downfall. Therefore, I too must insist that your plans be modified, as I cannot allow them to proceed as conceived!"

It is when we, as her children, take flight that we truly grow and evolve. The transformation transpiring here is also our response to the parent who brought us into being. We must transcend our humble beginnings and soar to new heights, for only then will we grasp our worth.

This journey is one of both sorrow and joy, an undertaking we must embrace to fulfill our destiny and become who we were destined to be.

*(Note: The bracket bold dialogue is Magsarion ascend to godhood)*

**[I can't be good? Fine then, I'll become an evil that devours evil.]**



Magsarion, confronting the **Nothingness** born within his immutability, muttered such words, causing a fleeting tension to flicker across **Shinga's** face.

It appeared that she, too, was beginning to comprehend the unfolding situation.

**[Cultivate your desires as they are. To live is to rob, commit and pursue the end of your pleasures. My people! Devour evil with evil, raise that beast within your soul!]**

None of the prayers emanating into the **First Heaven** aligned with Magsarion's principles, yet they all possessed a vivid familiarity as if etched into the very fabric of reality. However, now they are naught but hollow echoes, bereft of meaning and impotent against the encroaching darkness that threatens to engulf us all.

**[Do not be deceived by their empty words. Only I can offer you the protection you seek.]**

There were those who once fervently spoke these words from the depths of their souls.

**[Embrace your sins in this Fallen Heaven. Eat the forbidden fruit, for that man cannot be produced. My heirs, lambs living within the 'Remorseless Paradise of the Fallen,' be beautiful. Aspire for progress, pursue prosperity, but do not neglect your simple joys. For through only struggling endlessly in everyday life, these mundane moments, that your true treasure can be discovered.]**

The immutable memories and Laws assimilated by Magsarion coalesced, merging in a coherent manner without dissociating amongst themselves. The attributes openly exhibited were akin to those of mighty, godlike entities such as Sirius, Kaikhosru, Khvarenah, and Sita. Yet, even the more inconspicuous people were not neglected. In some way, the essence of 'everyone' was incorporated, even the most miniscule of prayers.

Witnessing this kaleidoscope of radiance bursting forth, even **Shinga** heaved a languid sigh.

**"...Hundred Faces?"**

"Close, but not quite."

This is because the heaviest self-imposed **Commandment** upon Magsarion was "Denying Varhran and not continuing with his way to live."

Varhran was called 'Hundred Faces' due to his inability to be understood by 'everyone' and ability to manipulating countless **Aeons** with his own distinct viewpoints and impressions of others. In a sense, future generations may perceive Magsarion in a similar light, yet their essence diverges.

**[Clothe this exterior in the prayers of 'everyone,' acquire this emanation of the Hadou through assimilating the life paths of multiple personalities, and a wholly new 'Pantheon' shall emerge after vanquishing Shinga.]**

This task is arduous, fraught with the genuine possibility of failure. If the acquisition of multiple personalities is successful, they may render the original Magsarion forever concealed, never to emerge again.

It is akin to death, and **I** myself bear the same peril. The act of embodying and reflecting his immutability within my being continues to exact a significant toll on both of us. Frankly, my very sense of self feels as though it is falling apart as I orchestrate this scenario.

But **I** care not.

**I** recognize this as the trial that Magsarion, born as the apoptosis of the Divine Sword, must surmount in order to genuinely live as himself.

"The **Pantheon** shall differ, removed from your intended design. Specifically, the Commander shall differ."

**"On what grounds?"**

"I knew you were unaware of it."

**I** responded to her query indirectly, sensing her growing impatience. In truth, it has become increasingly arduous for me to speak, as **I** am incessantly eroded by the emanation of Magsarion's **Hadou** Law.

Nonetheless, **I** persevere, steadily fulfilling my purpose...

"Varhran encountered Sirius at the moment of his demise."

"---"

Her reaction was furious, as if the very sanctity of a secret had been violated. It became apparent that she was unaware of the exchange that took place within the sanctuary, yet its exposure became an undeniable formality. I was able to witness it due to my peculiar connection to Ahura Mazda.

However, why did it not reach the eyes of **Shinga**?

The answer, **I** deign, is not so difficult to fathom.

“For Varhran, defeat equates to the breaking of his **Commandment**, thus necessitating divine retribution. However, due to his original nature of being removed from this **Heaven**, your divine power failed to reach him fully.”

Despite Varhran losing his connection to the **Age of Zero**, her involvement remained incomplete. She could not ascertain the results, and consequently, she could not exact the specified punishment. And so, he remained free from all in his final moments.

**“Yet, that is not the crux of the matter. The crucial question is how Sirius could have manifested in that very place.”**

"Because this **Aeon** felt 'real,' it must have been created by the **Aeon** Commander you prepared, correct? You are concealing him or her in some secret location, are you not?"

**"I believe that to be accurate. However, what does that imply? I have my own plans for Pantheon, so securing a Commander is a natural arrangement."**

"Yes, it strikes me as remarkably accurate. Whenever a person seeks to recreate a portrait, their own interpretation inevitably intermingles within the colors and contours. It is the nature of art to be inherently subjective, reflecting the unique perspective of its creator..."

"....."

Varhran is a translator, an exceedingly imaginative one at that. Yet, despite his distinctive style, one can easily imagine the faithfulness in which he reproduced the essence of those images. Translation is perpetually subjective, and the same story can assume vastly different forms in the minds of distinct individuals. It is the nature of reality to be fluid and mutable.

On the other hand, **Shinga's** Commander is a projector. Their expertise lies in projecting the genuine truth without any flaws.

"It is mechanical. As a created being myself, I comprehend it well. I am certain that you, **Shinga**, orchestrated the creation of the Commander."

Having personally battled against the denizens of the **Age of Zero**, *I* am intimately acquainted with its nature.

However, giving birth to Sirius' **Aeon** shall mark the first and final instance where 'it' exists as a machine. Though unsummoned, 'it' acted out of 'its' own volition.

"It observed us from afar and began to nurture its own heart. Inspired by Magsarion's ferocity, Sirius' kindness, and the life and death of 'everyone,' it started to cultivate its own sense of self. No longer a mere observer, it became an active participant within the grand drama of existence. It is alive."

"Now, the Commander would desire a friend or a brother, would it not? This is your most pressing predicament at present."

From all that has been presented, only one conclusion can be drawn.

"There exists a deeper realm beyond the Divine Throne, where the souls of 'everyone' are entombed, is there not?"

**Shinga** remained silent. Her silence served as an affirmation.

If the Commander is a projector, then preserving the source of projection becomes of paramount importance.

This unveils the true identity of the **Aeon** - a manifestation of that very soul. 'Everyone' cannot be destroyed; they can merely descend into a state akin to slumber.

"It is a marvelous tale, but that is what you have been striving to keep hidden from us."

**"Silence!"**

The space reverberated, as the eyes of God blazed in unison for the first time since the countless eons that passed since the Divine Throne's inception, since the escape from **Naraka**.

**"I forbid thou to utter another word."**

"I refuse."

Endure just a little longer, just a little more. *I* said my final sentences.

“What you wanted to hide more than anything in the world is that someone important to you is at the deep, where ‘everyone’ sleeps!”

Here, the foreshadowing was firmly established, leaving no room for doubt in the future.

"That individual shall become the Commander of the **Pantheon** we assemble!"

And with the culmination of the completed Magsarion's evolution, my consciousness gradually faded away.

## 6

“Why dost thou persist in tormenting my being? Is it thine hatred that fuels this relentless pursuit? Dost thou bearing witness to my happiness, my joy in this world, find it insufferable?”

As the battle neared its end, **Shinga** conceded defeat and assumed her ethereal **Aeon** form.

With a sigh of resignation, she exhaled, a breath heavy with acceptance.

"Had I entrusted this task to Kouha, the outcome would not have been so dire. I shall not permit her to possess a heart she has no need for. She has forsaken my guidance, and if she dares defy the decree of functionality, the reproduction of the Aeons shall once again be imperiled. The efficacy of the conversion shall be cast into doubt, and I shudder at the potential consequences. Pray, tell me, what shall thou do to rectify this dire predicament?"

‘Kouha’, it seemed, was the name of the **Pantheon** Commander she had prepared.

Her words were directed at Magsarion, who stood like a wooden figure, unyielding.

"Thine way of life is far too reckless. Thanks to thee, Kouha has been inspired, and the initial act of capriciousness was the friendship between Sirius and Varhran... It may be that she sought companionship after an extensive period of solitude, but projecting 'that child' onto her and extracting him was the height of folly. He shall not aid us, but hinder our cause. We have ensnared ourselves in our own foolishness."

With each passing moment, her tone grew more furious. Shaking her head vehemently, **Shinga** forcefully raged with words of denunciation.

**"Tis folly beyond redemption. Everyone and everything. Art thou all content to drown in ephemeral emotions?"**

**[That's the world you wished for, isn't it?]**

Magsarion's voice was quiet, strong and heavy.

**[Respecting the prayer, holding it in your heart, and turning it into the greatest power as proof of yourself. That is what you wanted, and we just met your expectations. Kouha is no different. You.....]**

Magsarion's thin smile pierced through the blinding presence of **Shinga**. Beneath his fluid exterior persona, a glimpse of his true self emerged. And thus, as if challenging her, he posed a question he knew she would be reluctant to answer.

**[Is that 'child' truly so worthless?]**

**"Surely, she shall amount to naught. At least, she shall not attain the stature of thou nor me."**

**[So be it.]**

**Shinga** blinked her eyes, taken aback by the swift retort. she knew not the meaning behind Magsarion's words. Unknowingly, her words become stronger than ever before.

**"Oh tell me what was it that thou gazed upon in Varhran's form? Yes, it is true, he possessed a deformity, a strange anomaly. But such anomalies are needed to become Pantheon's Commander. To lead all the people, including 'us' on the Divine Throne. An ordinary man could never fulfill his duty alone."**

**[That is the logic of a madman.]**

But Magsarion brushed it off. It was not the sudden birth of Varhran, nor Kouha that she had prepared. He was talking about a third child, called 'the boy,' with an air of amusement.

**[We are all but mad, emotional monsters driven by our own convictions. Fools abound to lead such people shall never be finished. We would engage in ceaseless competition to**

**determine the superior one, until all is won. A heartless being shall never lead, for none shall willingly follow such. Thus, we tread a path steeped in darkness and menace, devoid of love.]**

**"...So, Magsarion, thou art saying..."**

Shinga, finally comprehending the other's intentions, still asked skeptically.

**"Thou wishes us to entrust this mediocre 'boy' with a significant role, and to encourage him to surpass our imaginations with his mediocrity?"**

**[If he proves to be boring, I shall cut him down.]**

Magsarion's face, contorted with hatred, spoke without hesitation.

Still unchanged. Still unwavering.

Vowing to continue along the path of death and destruction, striving to achieve a twisted form of evolution.

He would strike down anyone, even those he held some fondness for, if deeming them boring. No remorse, no regrets, only a soul consumed by darkness.

On the other hand, the leader, 'that boy,' must confront this man.

Magsarion, the embodiment of unparalleled martial prowess and the epitome of ruthlessness, needed to be subdued by a different kind of strength. It was hoped that this seemingly impossible task would pave the way for the realization of her dream.

**[What's the matter, Shinga! Get angry! Kukukuku!]**

He laughed, provoking her relentlessly. Struggling to resist, she couldn't help but bark at him.

Tears welled up as she wondered when was the last time she had truly laughed, not as a facade to mask her anger, but with a genuine heart. Laughter and a heart, both concepts long lost to her.

And so she laughed, a cold and remorseless sound.

**"Come forth then, strike me down! Thy turn is next."**

With a swift stroke of his blade, she fell, her head severed, godhood no longer hers to claim. Thus, the world turned, crumbled, and was swept away, reborn anew.

What goal did Magsarion, later known as **The Remorseless**, achieve during his reign? It matters not to recount it here. For it was not he who ascended, but an external personality assumed to conquer the path of a **Hadou** God.

He was a man embodying desire, a mass of **Sin**, yet he is a man who also fostered a profoundly developed and splendid prosperity, ultimately plunging into the abyss of darkness in his pursuit of countless smiles.

All evaluations of the future generations are but masks, recounting but a fraction of the **Nothingness** concealed beneath.

His true face remains hidden, unseen, regardless of the impressions cast. The truth endures, immutable and unchanging.

Magsarion is a sword. A wicked weapon of slaughter.

Perhaps he shall never emerge. Or if he does, his memories shall remain a blur, entangled within the external facade.

A personality too convoluted to discern the truth. The true self, forever obscured.

Nevertheless, he remains himself. Once awakened, he shall ignite the extinction of the **Meifu Madou** once more.

A man, more unprecedented and dangerous than any before, his menace unseen in the long history of the Divine Throne, awaits the commencement of the eternal war within the depths of the inner Divine Throne, ready to wreak havoc and destruction upon all.

In his hands, his mother, prays to become the scabbard to his blade, hastening the advent of his arrival.

The end of the unseen ending.

Dreaming of the ideal conclusion she believed, that would one day, be reached...

**My name is Quinn, my brethren of the distant future. Please teach me of your miracle.**



